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Allegiances

[image]

{Situated in the old forest}

THUNDERCLAN

Leader

Greenstar - a brown tabby tom with lime green eyes and black socks

Deputy

Wildjay - gray tom with wild, blue eyes

Medicine Cat

Blackwing - pure black she-cat with blue-green eyes

Medicine Cat Apprentice

Dewpaw - orange tabby tom with blue eyes and white socks and a white striped tail

Warriors

Chillbone - white tom with green eyes and a black underbelly
Apprentice, Ashpaw

Appleheart - dark ginger tom with blazing green eyes and a white underbelly

Eagleshadow - dark brown tom with gray flecks and dark green eyes and black ear-tips and a black muzzle

Bubbleflame - light grayish, almost pink she-cat with blue eyes and a black tail-tip

Lavenderwing - reddish-ginger she-cat with yellow eyes and silver

socks

Blazefur - ginger tom with copper eyes and brown splotches - father of Cougarkit

Stripebelly - silver tabby tom with a white underbelly and green eyes

Stormbrew - gray she-cat with blue eyes and a black splotch around her left eye

Twilightshock - black tom with gray socks, a gray muzzle, gray ear-tips, and yellow-orange eyes

Graysplotch - smoky gray tom with white splotches and white socks
Apprentice, Shadowpaw

Clawflank - chocolate brown tom with dark green eyes and a ginger underbelly

Woodspark - light copper tabby tom with brown eyes

Zephyrbreeze - black she-cat with pale green eyes

Icehaze - white she-cat with light blue eyes and black socks and a black tail-tip

Rockhide - short furred calico she-cat with vivid blue eyes
Apprentice, Tigerpaw

Ottertail - silver tabby she-cat with grass-green eyes and six toes on her front right paw

Boulderthorn - gray-brown tom with amber eyes and white socks and a white underbelly - father of Lightkit

Whitecloud - white tom with mismatched brown and blue eyes

Dirtfur - brown tom with dirty-looking fur that sticks in all directions and blue eyes

Jackalfrost - brown tabby tom with blue eyes and amber splotches

Slateleaf - black tom with light green eyes and a white underbelly

Amberfern - amber she-cat with brown eyes
Apprentice, Darkpaw

Driftflurry - brown tom with amber eyes and a white underbelly

Swanspiral - silver she-cat with copper eyes and black stripes

Apprentices

Ashpaw - gray she-cat with blue eyes

Shadowpaw - dark gray tom with dark green eyes and a white tail-tip

Tigerpaw - ginger tom with black tabby stripes and green eyes and a white underbelly

Darkpaw - light gray she-cat with dark navy eyes and a silver tail-tip

Queens

Kinkfur - dark brown she-cat with green eyes and white socks - *mother to Silverkit, a silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes and white socks and white splotches*

Fawnfur - light tannish-brown she-cat with green eyes and a white underbelly and tail-tip - *mate is Blazefur, kit is Cougarkit, a tan tabby tom with a white underbelly, white muzzle, white ear-tips, white tail-tip, white socks, and green eyes*

Cedarfoot - smoky gray she-cat with copper eyes and silver stripes - *mate is Boulderthorn, kit is Lightkit, a light copper tom with blue eyes and white splotches*

Elders

Vixenheart - ginger she-cat with amber eyes

Mouseclaw - light gray tom with green eyes

Snakejaw - brown tom with amber eyes and white socks

SHADOWCLAN

Leader

Sharkstar - blue-gray well-built tom with striking copper eyes and white socks

Deputy

Cloudedsun - snowy white tom with bright yellow eyes

Medicine Cat

Flamefrost - ginger she-cat with bright green eyes, white socks, and a white muzzle

Medicine Cat Apprentice

Volepaw - creamy-brown tom with light amber eyes

Warriors

Goldenfrost - short golden-furred she-cat with teal eyes

Snakesand - gray tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Echopaw

Plumflight - smoky black she-cat with jade-green eyes that are slightly crossed

Aurorabreeze - white tabby tom with leaf-green eyes and a white locket of fur on his chest

Dawnfoot - light brown tabby tom with yellow-flecked green eyes and long, abundant white whiskers

Quietpelt - chocolate tom with amber eyes and white splotches

Luckyear - chocolate-silver tabby tom with amber eyes
Apprentice, Lionpaw

Dappleclaws - black she-cat with ocean-green eyes

Silkspark - fawn torbie she-cat with amber eyes and a long tail

Glidingfoot - silver tabby tom with deep blue eyes and a large build

Cobracloud - cream cameo tom with violet-tinted eyes and sharply pointed ears

Poplarfang - gray tom with blue eyes and rounded ears

Sedgefang - silver tabby tom with grass-green eyes and gray socks

Robinsoul - black tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Whiskerpaw

Specklewing - dark gray she-cat with flame-orange eyes
Apprentice, Vinepaw

Lizardspark - dark ginger tabby she-cat with with pale gray-blue eyes

Shortear - white tom with chestnut-colored eyes, black socks, and a chestnut-colored underbelly

Rippleleaf - brown tabby she-cat with gray flecks, yellow-flecked eyes, and a stub of a tail
Apprentice, Gravelpaw

Aldershine - hazel she-cat with blue eyes and a white underbelly and black splotches

Violetspark - blue-silver tabby she-cat with violet-ish eyes and a sturdy, muscular build

Apprentices

Lionpaw - golden she-cat with bright copper eyes and copper ear-tips and a copper tail-tip

Echopaw - light gray she-cat with vivid blue eyes and white socks

Gravelpaw - dark gray tom with amber eyes and black tabby stripes

Vinepaw - gray tom with copper eyes and a long tail

Whiskerpaw - black tom with light green eyes, a white underbelly,

and thick whiskers

Queens

Willowgaze - brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes - *mother to Cloverkit, a black she-cat with green eyes and a white diamond on her chest*

Mothmoon - light gray she-cat with light amber eyes and a white underbelly and thick whiskers

Elders

Nutflight - brownish-gray tom with green eyes and white socks

Goosescreech - light silver-gray tabby tom with orange eyes

WINDCLAN

Leader

Larchstar - light brown she-cat with cold amber eyes

Deputy

Whitesoul - short furred cinnamon she-cat with leaf-green eyes and sharply pointed ears with small tufts for the tips

Medicine Cat

Brookwing - chocolate calico she-cat with vivid copper eyes and long whiskers

Medicine Cat Apprentice

Freezepaw - silver tom with deep blue eyes and long legs

Warriors

Brushbramble - chocolate she-cat with blue eyes and a white underbelly

Cardinalcall - ginger tom with green-blue eyes and a black diamond

on his chest

Thrushgaze - lilac tabby tom with blue eyes

Finchnose - smoky gray tom with amber flecks and copper eyes - kit is Gorsekit

Quickflight - light brown tabby tom with green eyes and a white underbelly and white splotches. He is the fastest runner in his Clan
Apprentice, Firpaw

Swampflare - silver tabby tom with green eyes and black flecks
Apprentice, Harepaw

Fastfang - cream she-cat with tan flecks and blue-green eyes

Brindlecloud - white-silver she-cat with amber eyes and black flecks and a black tail-tip

Beetletooth - blue-silver tabby she-cat with black tabby stripes

Brownpelt - brown tabby tom with green eyes and a white underbelly and a white muzzle

Saberflare - cinnamon-furred tom with blue eyes and black socks and black ears

Drizzletooth - smoky gray she-cat with orange eyes and white splotches

Acornstorm - chestnut-furred she-cat with copper eyes and dark brown flecks

Frogwhisker - creamy-brown tom with dark green eyes and a long tail and long legs

Lilynose - calico she-cat with green eyes and a white tail-tip

Eaglewing - fawn-colored tom with yellow eyes and youthful, kit-like features

Cherryflower - white she-cat with green-blue eyes and black

splotches

Apprentices

Astralpaw - black she-cat with white dapples and yellow eyes

Firpaw - flame colored tom with brown flecks and a brown underbelly and muzzle

Harepaw - white tabby tom with copper eyes and black splotches

Queens

Prickledaisy - pale brown-gray she-cat with mismatched green and brown eyes - *mother to Gorsekit, a white she-cat with cream and brown splotches and light blue eyes and black ear-tips*

Elders

Mudeye - tan-brown tabby tom with green-blue eyes

RIVERCLAN

Leader

Crocodilestar - black tabby tom with dark navy blue eyes and white socks. Long fangs like a crocodile.

Deputy

Coyotehowl - light brown tabby tom with gray eyes

Medicine Cat

Dashingwhisker - blue-gray tom with silver-gray eyes and a black muzzle

Medicine Cat Apprentice

Batwing - dark blue-gray tom with amber eyes

Warriors

Ashenheart - gray she-cat with silver-blue eyes and copper splotches

Gingerclaw - ginger tom with green eyes and white socks and long whiskers

Beechchill - short furred dilute brown she-cat with blue eyes
Apprentice, Mosspaw

Crimsonstorm - reddish-brown tabby she-cat with white splotches and green eyes

Cricketshock - dark brown tom with amber eyes and white flecks
Apprentice, Garpaw

Marigoldshine - smoky black she-cat with silver paws and a long tail and long fangs

Flowereye - silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes and tabby stripes

Nightwhisker - dark gray tom with yellow eyes and a nice, muscular build

Crowclaws - black tom with orange eyes

Bubblefur - white-silver she-cat with blue-gray eyes and a black underbelly and black ear-tips

Flickertooth - light copper tom with sky-blue eyes and white socks
Apprentice, Rattlepaw

Crystalspike - silver-blue-gray she-cat with amber eyes and pointed ears

Midnightspark - dark gray she-cat with white speckles and a white muzzle and tail-tip

Rustyflame - dark ginger tom with web-like paws and brown flecks and copper socks

Streamfur - dark silver tom with black flecks and mismatched copper and green eyes

Apprentices

Garpaw - golden-brown she-cat with dark blue eyes and white splotches

Rattlepaw - chestnut colored tom with black flecks and dark green eyes and a ginger underbelly and muzzle

Mosspaw - copper-amber tom with mossy-green eyes and a white underbelly

Queens

None

Elders

Nettlestorm - blue-gray she-cat with silver-gray eyes and black splotches and a black tail-tip

CATS OUTSIDE OF CLANS

Frostbite - silver-gray tom with cold icy blue eyes

Kestrel - dark brown she-cat with dark brown eyes and white flecks

Atticus - dark gray tabby tom with copper eyes and bobbed ear-tips like a bobcat

Prologue

[image]

A light breeze soared through the trees. A black shadow slunk in the bushes, keeping low to the ground. His yellow gaze shifted to the stars and he let out an annoyed hiss. His claws unsheathed in the anticipation. "I'll get my revenge on you," he stated with clasped jaws angrily.

A fight was going on ahead between some Dark Forest and StarClan cats. Well, it was an argue right now, but the black tom sensed it would turn bloody soon. He crept up to the scene, keeping his hindquarters down, tail flicking behind him.

"That's not the point!" A StarClan cat hissed. "The Dark Forest doesn't have the power to do anything it wants!" A white she-cat snarled, lashing her tail.

"Oh, Icestar. The Dark Forest can have *anything* it wants. Although, you should know that, correct?" A senile smile gathered on the ginger tabby's jaws, as Pantherflare could tell.

"I smell another Dark Forest cat," a gray tom on the side of Icestar meowed quickly.

"You are on the border of the Dark Forest, Spiderhawk," the ginger tabby pointed out. Pantherflare nodded, his yellow eyes turning cold.

"Obviously..." A gray tom beside the Dark Forest ginger one muttered. Pantherflare strained his ears to listen better as he watched from the side of the Dark Forest.

"Russetstar!" Icestar snarled to the ginger tom. "Do you not understand what I am saying? We won't let you have half of our territory. Your shadows will only disappear when crossing it!" She exclaimed.

"This is not your decision, Icestar. You aren't the leader of StarClan, incase you didn't know. We will take over StarClan. Then, your Clan will be destroyed from the inside out!" Russetstar yowled.

"Never!" Icestar denied. "ThunderClan can never be destroyed."

"Your 'loyal' Gullstar didn't fix your Clan so well, eh?" Russetstar growled.

"Your leadership over WindClan didn't do so well either, mouse-brain!" Spiderhawk replied.

"Your stupid StarClan can't restrain from our strength," Russetstar stated, raising his head and standing tall. "Either accept that we will take half of your territory or *die*."

"I'd never let you take over half of our grounds," Icestar growled. "Spiderhawk, Hazelpounce, Cootwillow, Pinesting, Foxleap, Leafstar, Mistystar, attack and *kill* these Dark Forest cats!" Icestar exclaimed.

"Scorpionwillow, Shadowedheart, Oakclaw, Sandstorm, Marrowscreech, Maggot, Sharpstar, Hawkheart, Lilacfur, attack!" Russetstar yowled. The area became splattered with blood.

Pantherflare let out a hiss under his breath and leaped forward, joining in on the attack. His claws met the fur of Foxleap, an ancient ThunderClan cat. The ginger tom tussled with the black tom and threw him out of the way, raking his claws down his stomach. Pantherflare raised his paw on the air and slammed it down on Foxleap. With a roll the black tom was to his paws, staring at Foxleap. They were now circling each other. Pantherflare knew who was fighting each other.

Spiderhawk would fight Shadowedheart for their hate for each other, Icestar and Russetstar would fight for their side of the border, Leafstar and Sharpstar would fight because of Leafstar's new hate for her 'loyal' deputy, and many more would fight to fight. The Dark Forest had more cats, though.

"Scared?" Foxleap snickered. Pantherflare narrowed his eyes. "I was

simply planning," the black tom spat back. Pantherflare leaped for Foxleap and the ginger tom braced, but Maggot and Lilacfur joined in. Pantherflare let a smile creep across his lips. The Dark Forest was winning.

Maggot scraped his claws down Foxleap's muzzle, Lilacfur leaped upon his back, and Pantherflare was landing blows to his flank. Pantherflare let out a screech as Mistystar crashed into him. Pantherflare tumbled to the ground, grappling with Mistystar. But he realized her weight was gone and scrambling to his paws. Her eyes were glazed dull and her paw twitched then her claws sheathed. Mistystar was actually dead.

"Weak cat," Pantherflare saw Hawkheart growl, staring at the dead Mistystar. Hazelpounce, Cootwillow, Leafstar, Mistystar, Marrowscreech, and Oakclaw lay dead. Pantherflare leaped over to where Foxheart was and landed a killing blow to his neck. Foxleap spluttered out blood, falling to the ground. Hawkheart padded over and nodded to Pantherflare.

The black Dark Forest tom cringed. A ripple passed through his body. His fur ruffled. He let out a yowl and bent his head. He coughed up blood and closed his eyes tightly. Suddenly, Pantherflare jerked his head up. He whipped it around and watched Russetstar bite into Icestar's throat.

"No!" Pantherflare stuttered, leaping over. Russetstar let out a chilling laugh and watched the white she-cat writhe on the ground.

"Y-You're back...." Icestar stammered, laying still and looking at Pantherflare. "M-My poor son... I am so sorry..." Icestar cringed. "Go. G-Go with Spide-Spiderhawk and w-warn St-StarClan of thi-this!"

"No, Pantherflare!" Russetstar snarled. "You know why you are here. StarClan turned against you, remember?"

"Of course I do." Pantherflare looked at Spiderhawk. "But it's better to forgive and forget!"

"No!" Russetstar snarled, tackling Pantherflare.

"Spiderhawk, run!" Pantherflare and Icestar yowled at the same time. Spiderhawk nodded and fled from the scene to StarClan.

"Weak, cowardly StarClan cat! You are a *traitor*!" Russetstar snarled, the other Dark Forest cats padding up.

"No, I-" Pantherflare never got the time to finish before Russetstar killed him, raking his claws down Pantherflare's stomach. The world became black and he yowled in agony. Was StarClan doomed? Pantherflare would never know.

Okay, I know pretty much no one understands what is going on XD That's why I'm going to make a super edition that revolves around Pantherflare or Icestar.

Anyway, there's the prologue that was never established in the first version of this book. Let's hope this book has more detail and will include more things :)

Thanks everyone for reading! Feedback would be very appreciated! May StarClan light everyone's paths ✧

Chapter 1

[image]

Cougarkit padded outside, his fur ruffling in the wind. A silver tabby she-cat padded up from behind him.

"So, what do you want to do?" Cougarkit asked Silverkit, the silver tabby she-cat.

"Well... Tag?" Silverkit suggested, tipping her head to the side. Cougarkit nodded eagerly, and a smile crept on Silverkit's lips.

"Hey! Look!" Silverkit's eyes widened and she pointed behind Cougarkit. The tan tom whipped his head to look behind him but nothing was there. Silverkit prodded Cougarkit's flank. "You're it!" She laughed, turning tail and running. Cougarkit turned his head to her. "Oh no you don't! No one can escape *me*!"

Cougarkit run after Silverkit. He swerved around the fresh-kill pile. Silverkit swerved to the left so she didn't hit a warrior, and Cougarkit tumbled below the amber she-cat. "Hey! Watch it," the she-cat growled. Cougarkit didn't take notice and scrambled back to his paws, pelting after Silverkit.

"You getting tired?" The silver kit taunted, Cougarkit a few tail-lengths away from her.

"N-Never!" Cougarkit panted.

Slateleaf, a ThunderClan warrior, jumped in front of Silverkit, blocking her. "Got her trapped, Cougarkit," the tom purred. "You can *finally* tag her."

"Noooooooo!" Silverkit wailed.

"Yes!" Cougarkit cheered. The tan tom tagged Silverkit, sitting down, panting heavily. "Th-Thanks, Slateleaf!" The black tom nodded, padding away.

"Well, what do we play now?" Silverkit inquired. Cougarkit was already bored.

"We could play hide and seek," Cougarkit suggested, flicking his tail. Silverkit wagged her tail excitedly, nodding. "Yeah! Let's play that! But *you* have to count first."

"I chased you first, though!" Cougarkit groaned.

"Too bad. Now *don't* cheat."

"Alright alright. I don't even cheat!"

"Yeah right," Silverkit purred. "Can you count to forty?" Cougarkit nodded, and Silverkit ran off. The tan kit closed his eyes and placed his paws over his eyes. "One. Two. Three... Eight.... Twenty.... Twenty nine..... Forty! Ready or not, here I come!"

Cougarkit looked around. He looked near the apprentices' den and noticed a darker gray tail. Was that Silverkit? Cougarkit wriggled his haunches and leaped on the tail. But to his surprise, he was thrown off and a gray she-cat hissed at him. "What was that for, *Cougarkit*?" The she-cat growled.

"S-Sorry, I-" But Cougarkit was cut off when a ginger and black tom padded from the apprentices' den. "Lay off, Ashpaw. He's just a kit." The ginger tabby tom looked at Cougarkit and purred. "Hi! I'm Tigerpaw, and this is Ashpaw."

"Whatever," Ashpaw growled and turned tail, stalking into the darkness of the apprentices' den. Tigerpaw dipped his head and followed. "Ashpaw! Wait up-" Cougarkit turned back around, shaking his head. *Okay, next time, if you see Ashpaw, AVOID HER!* He thought. Now he needed to look for Silverkit. He guessed where she was now. He snorted and rolled his eyes. "I bet she's behind the nursery." He padded over to the nursery;

The tan tom looked behind the nursery, and saw a silver blob. "Found ya," Cougarkit purred, tapping Silverkit. She turned around and padded out. "Oh, come on! How did you find me?" Cougarkit smirked. "I have my ways."

"It's my turn I guess," Silverkit pouted, but perked up. "You better watch out, because you're dealing with the *best* seeker!" The kit snorted but didn't say anything else. "Okay, *'best seeker.'* Go count now."

Silverkit began to count and Cougarkit looked around. Where would he hide? *Warriors' den? Nah. Nursery? Too easy. Medicine cat den? Blackwing would kill me. Or Dewpaw. Oooooh! What about* that *den?* Cougarkit noticed a larger den that sat upon a rock. What was that den? It didn't look like any cat was inside, so he shrugged. That's where he'd hide.

Cougarkit scrambled on the rocks that lead up to the strange den. He finally reached the top. No cat noticed him, either. *Hah! My pelt blends in!* He thought, running inside. It was dark, very dark, but Cougarkit's eyes adjusted. A single nest was in the middle of the den. Lichen and vines covered the sides and top of the den. He rushed to the back of the den, slinking down.

After what seemed like moons, Silverkit crept inside. "Cougarkit? Are you in here?" Cougarkit was so bored he stood up. Silverkit must've spotted him because she rushed over. She tagged him. "You've been here the whole time?" She snorted. "Honestly, I found you pretty quick..."

"Look, it took me 5 seconds to find you. For you to find me? 5 *moons*." Cougarkit flicked his tail playfully. But suddenly a dark shadow appeared at the mouth of the cave - Cougarkit's eyes widened and he took a step back, Silverkit turning to look at the shadow of a large cat and doing the same as the tan tom.

"What are you doing in my cave?" The voice boomed. Cougarkit's ears flattened. But suddenly the voice broke into a purr. A brown tabby tom stepped forward, staring at the two kits. "Ah, Silverkit and Cougarkit." His green eyes gleamed. "I'm Greenstar, leader of ThunderClan. You two are in my den, the leader's den."

"Oh! Greenstar! We're sorry..." The two kits meowed, padding forward into the sunlight.

"It's fine," Greenstar replied. "Just know next time not to come in.

Unless it's an emergency, of course."

"Yes, Greenstar," Cougarkit and Silverkit meowed in unison, leaving the den.

"Well, that was fun!" Cougarkit meowed sarcastically when they reached the foot of the rocks. "It actually *was* pretty fun. We got to see Greenstar! The *leader* of ThunderClan! And he actually spoke to us."

"Had a little visit with Greenstar, eh? Yeah right!"

Silverkit and Cougarkit whipped their heads to the third kit that stayed in the nursery - Lightkit. He was bigger, more arrogant, and meaner.

"Yes," Cougarkit meowed back, narrowing his eyes. Silverkit and Cougarkit were only four moons old, while Lightkit was going to become an apprentice tomorrow.

"Sure, sure," Lightkit rolled his eyes. "Now, I'd like some prey. Go get me a thrush."

"We aren't your servants!" Cougarkit snapped back. Lightkit knocked Cougarkit down, hissing. "I said, *get. Me. A. Thrush*!"

"Pick on someone your own size!" Silverkit snapped. "Go get your own prey!" Cougarkit heard a call from his mother, Fawnfur. Kinkfur, Silverkit's mother, also called her kit. "Let's go," Silverkit murmured, and the two kits padded back to the nursery. Lightkit was muttering something to himself, rolling his eyes and lashing his tail angrily. Cougarkit smirked. Lightkit might be bigger, but he stood no chance against two four moon old kits.

AGH. *Finally* finished! I don't know why this chapter took me so long, it was so easy XD
Anyway, I've been kind of sick lately but I'm still writing! Sorry this chapter was a bit late.

I can't wait to *really* get into this book. So many more things are going to be added! A prophecy, more cats, more characters, and everything will actually be explained unlike the first

version XD More chapters (let's hope) and more detail! Cougar will be an apprentice longer, make more friends, and be swaggy. But Cougar is swaggy anyway. XD

Welp, I hope you enjoyed this chapter! I know the little Author's Notes at the end of the chapters may be boring but I still like to write them :) Feedback would be very appreciated! Vote and comment what you thought, and may StarClan light your path! ✧

Chapter 2

[image]

Dawn light seeped through the nursery. Cougarkit opened his eyes but closed them tightly again due to the light. He heard Greenstar's gathering call outside. Why did there have to be a meeting so early? Cougarkit backed away to the rear of the den and opened his eyes once more, relieved to actually be able to see. Silverkit woke up soon after Greenstar's call, and retreated to the back of the nursery where Cougarkit was.

"Do you think we can watch the meeting?" Silverkit mewed. "I think Lightkit is going to become an apprentice today!"

Cougarkit scoffed. "Do you want to see Bratkit become an apprentice or something? I don't really care." Cougarkit frowned, then it turned into a smirk. He prodded Silverkit playfully. "Oooooooh!"

"What?" Silverkit snapped, lashing her striped tail.

"You like Lightkit!"

"Do not!" Silverkit mewed, eyes widening.

"Do too."

"Do not!"

"Do too!"

"Do. Not!"

"Yep!" Cougarkit meowed. "That's why you want to see the meeting!"

"What are you kits fighting about?" Kinkfur, Silverkit's mother, purred. "Come on, come see the ceremony for Lightkit! He's becoming an apprentice, you know." Cougarkit stole a glance from

Silverkit and laughed to himself. Yes, they knew very well.

"Let's just go watch," Silverkit replied exasperatingly.

Cougarkit and Silverkit exited the nursery, padding to where their Clanmates sat. They both sat beside Stormbrew and Twilightshock. Twilightshock looked fondly down at the two kits. "First time coming to a meeting?" He inquired.

"Well, we've watched from the nursery, but we've never actually sat beside all of our Clanmates!" Cougarkit meowed, Silverkit nodding. Twilightshock purred. Cougarkit noticed a large dark gray or black tom come sit beside Stormbrew. He was large, muscular, and his eyes glinted with something that Cougarkit feared.

"Who's that? I've never seen them!" Cougarkit whispered to Silverkit. The silver she-kit looked at the black tom.

"Even after we've been kits *four* moons? You don't pay attention, do you?" Cougarkit stifled a laugh. Yeah, he didn't really pay attention. "Well..." She paused. "That's Shadowpaw. He's really mysterious, and always hangs around Ashpaw - oh, do you need me to tell you who Ashpaw is too?" Silverkit meowed sarcastically.

"No! I know!" Cougarkit protested. He shivered, remembering yesterday when he had been, well, practically yelled at by Ashpaw for pouncing on her tail. *Brat cat. Hey, that's a pretty good nickname for Ashpaw! I'll just call her that in my head...*

"Good," Silverkit purred. "Anyway, Shadowpaw always hangs around her and he's always mean to a lot of cats."

"Now that we are all gathered, the meeting will begin!" Greenstar hollered. Silverkit and Cougarkit hushed, as well as the rest of the Clan. Lightkit shouldered his way through the two kits, smirking. "Jealous?" He whispered, scoffing and padding below the Highrock.

"Lightkit, you have reached the age of six moons and it is time for you to become an apprentice. From this moment on, until you've earned your warrior name, you shall be known as Lightpaw. Your mentor will be Woodspark. Woodspark, this is your first apprentice.

You were mentored well by Boulderthorn and I expect you to pass down all that you learned to Lightpaw," Greenstar informed the tom. Woodspark nodded. "I will mentor Lightpaw well." Lightpaw and Woodspark touched noses.

"Lightpaw! Lightpaw! Lightpaw!" The Clan cheered. Silverkit seemed to be cheering his name pretty loud... Cougarkit needed to figure out what was up with Lightpaw and Silverkit. What if they *both* liked each other? Cougarkit stuck out his tongue.

After the tan kit's Clanmates dispersed Lightpaw bounded over to the two. "Congratulations on becoming an apprentice, Lightpaw!" Silverkit exclaimed. Cougarkit eyed her, then his gaze shifted to Lightpaw. Lightpaw looked curious. "Thanks, Silverkit." He looked at Cougarkit, dipping his head. "And you."

When Lightpaw padded off to find Woodspark, Cougarkit whipped to Silverkit, causing her to jump. "Gah! What is it?"

"I think you liking Lightpaw caused him to be nicer to us," Cougarkit stated. "I mean... He's never been that nice to us before."

"I don't like him!" She protested.

"Sure," Cougarkit laughed, flicking her tail with his own. "I know you do, you don't have to lie." Silverkit blushed a little.

Fawnfur padded over to Cougarkit. "How's my little warrior doing?" She asked.

"Great!" Cougarkit exclaimed.

"That's good," his mother purred. "You know, Blazefur should be returning soon. He went out on patrol before you woke up."

"Yay!" The tan kit exclaimed. He didn't see his father, Blazefur, too often. He was always busy, going to gatherings and going out on patrol. But he would get to see him today! Silverkit stood beside Cougarkit, her eyes a bit dull hearing about Cougarkit's father; No one knew who Silverkit's father was - it could be a Clanmate, a cat from another Clan, or even an outsider to the Clans! No one knew, so no one brought it up. Kinkfur had been very secretive about it,

but it was a queen's decision if she wanted to share who the father was with the Clan.

Suddenly, Blazefur, Amberfern and her apprentice, Darkpaw, Swanspiral, and Jackalfrost burst into camp. "Greenstar!" Blazefur, who was in the head of the patrol, howled. "Greenstar!" The brown tom dashed from his den and appeared in front of Blazefur in a matter of seconds. Blazefur and his patrol gathered around and told Greenstar what happened. Cougarkit strained his ears but couldn't catch what they were saying.

"Why are you eavesdropping? I'm sure Greenstar will tell us," Silverkit purred beside him.

"I know. I just wanted to hear," the tom pointed out.

Greenstar gaped at Blazefur and nodded, leaping on Highrock. "All cats old enough to- well, everyone's here so I'll move on. Blazefur, Jackalfrost, Darkpaw, Amberfern, and Swanspiral have found a group of foxes on our territory. There are about five in the pack and it is very dangerous in ThunderClan territory right now. I'm going to lead a patrol over there to drive the foxes out or even kill them if necessary. The cats going will be me, Wildjay, Blazefur, Swanspiral, Jackalfrost, Amberfern, Fawnfur, Chillbone, Clawflank, Graysplotch, Eagleshadow, Bubbleflame, Appleheart, Stripebelly, Twilightshock, Ottertail, Whitecloud, and Boulderthorn."

"Why can't I go?" Lightpaw pouted. Shadowpaw sat near the shadowy part of the apprentices' den, his eyes blazing. Lightpaw turned to see Shadowpaw and backed away to where Silverkit and Cougarkit were.

"This is highly dangerous. Only warriors should go, no apprentices. Foxes are rabid creatures," Greenstar explained. "All cats going, follow me." Greenstar leaped down from Highrock and headed into the forest, the cats he chose following him. The camp seemed to be a desert with so many warriors gone.

Cougarkit watched Ashpaw, Darkpaw, and Tigerpaw enter the apprentices' den. He looked back at Lightpaw.

"Shadowpaw scares me..." Lightpaw whispered to the two kits unexpectedly. "He's so mysterious and looks so... Ambitious."

"We still have to wait two more moons until we become apprentices," Silverkit pouted. Lightpaw touched her with his tail-tip. "It'll be fine. I'll help you along the way when you become an apprentice. You too, Cougarkit."

"I won't need help," Cougarkit spat, turning and heading toward the nursery. He didn't want to be treated like some little helpless kit (which he was, by the way). He wanted to do things on his own and show Lightpaw he wasn't messing around and could take care of himself. Silverkit and Lightpaw could play their little games, but Cougarkit wasn't going to have any of it.

I feel like this is a Thistleclaw, Snowfur, and Bluefur relationship. Except Bluefur is a tom. No? Just me? Alright.

Well, eek, this chapter is a bit late, sorry! XD So what do you think is going to happen during the fox fight? WHO WILL DIE?! (If anyone dies) You'll just have to wait and see ;)

Thanks for almost 100 views! It means so much that people are reading this! And all the lovely comments mean a lot to me as well! :D

Thanks everyone! Please vote and comment what you thought, and may StarClan light your path ✧

Chapter 3

[image]

Cougarkit could hear the yowls from afar. Worry pierced him and he hoped every cat that returned would be okay. But foxes were nasty creatures - he'd never seem one of them, but he knew what they were like. Vicious. Angry. Unforgiving.

"You can stop pacing, you're taking up the entire nursery," Silverkit complained.

"I can't stop! I feel like something bad is going to happen." Cougarkit sighed. "I mean, if you're so annoyed then go spend time with your precious Lightpaw."

Silverkit narrowed her eyes. "What's your problem with Lightpaw and I? We both like each other. You said you knew that. Yet you're so bothered by that fact and you keep complaining about it!"

"Sor-ee!" Cougarkit snapped. "Oh, wait - no I'm not."

"You're just as bad as Lightpaw used to be," Silverkit whispered angrily, stomping out of the nursery. Cougarkit watched Lightpaw run up to her. After a minute Lightpaw flashed Cougarkit with merciless eyes and Cougarkit growled. If Silverkit didn't want to be his friend anymore, that was just fine.

***

It had been a while before Cougarkit heard the rambling paws of his coming Clanmates. They were back! He expected to see bright and happy faces about how they drove out the foxes, but instead something else hit him like a monster. The cats returned - bloody, scarred, and grief-stricken. Cougarkit saw something he never wanted to see. His Clanmates were carrying a light tannish-brown body and a silver tabby body as well.

"Fawnfur!" Cougarkit screeched and ran to the bodies that were laid

on the ground. He didn't care about all the warriors staring at him. He buried his muzzle in his mother's fur. No... Fawnfur couldn't be dead... She just couldn't! His own mother. Her eyes were glazed over and clouded, looking lifeless as she stared up into the sky.

"I'm so sorry, Cougarkit," Lightpaw meowed, staring at the kit.

"You shouldn't be. No one should be sorry for her death! She fought like a true warrior..." The tan tom hissed. Lightpaw backed away to where Silverkit was, and he could feel her eyes brining into his pelt. Then, Cougarkit felt rage and anger toward one cat - Greenstar. He had chosen a *queen* to drive out foxes.

"You!" Cougarkit snarled, raising his head and locking his eyes to Greenstar's lime green ones. "You killed Fawnfur! Not a fox... You brought a queen to help you when there were more warriors to spare... Lavenderwing, Woodspark, Icehaze..." Greenstar looked guilty; his ears were flattened and his eyes showed sadness. Cougarkit hadn't even noticed the corpse of Ottertail, the other warrior that had been killed by a fox. Greenstar didn't reply and threw his bloody body onto the Highrock, staring down at all the cats.

"We drove out all the foxes, but with a price - Ottertail and Fawnfur were murdered recklessly by the foxes. I have also lost a life. Every cat that went were as strong as they could be." Yowls of grief surrounded the hollow as Greenstar turned tail and padded into his den. Wildjay, the deputy, stared at Greenstar as he entered the den in concern. He leaped up and followed Greenstar, darkness covering himself from being seen outside.

"Your mother fought strong."

Cougarkit felt his father's tail touch his shoulder. Blazefur looked down at Cougarkit in grief. "She really did. She died like a warrior. I want to bring her back to life as much as you do but we can't. Her spirit has already been sent to StarClan. Just know Fawnfur will always be by your side, and in your heart." Cougarkit, Blazefur, Kinkfur, and Cedarfoot sat vigil for Fawnfur. She had been such a wonderful cat and now she was gone... Killed by a fox.

Cougarkit noticed something. He looked into Fawnfur's claws. Fur. Not fox fur, though. *Black* fur.

Shadowpaw?

He snatched the fur out of her claws. "I-I'll be back," Cougarkit mewed. He only received a nod from Blazefur. Cougarkit scrambled behind the nursery and settled the fur down, staring at it. What if Shadowpaw had killed Fawnfur? But the possibilities were endless. Ashpaw, Darkpaw, Twilightshock, Blackwing, Slateleaf... Possibly even a cat from another Clan! He sniffed the fur but didn't find any scent on it - at least not that of a cat. It scented of oak trees and grass, so whoever killed her had disguised a scent on themselves. Whoever had killed her had been planning to do it.

Cougarkit narrowed his eyes and buried the fur in the ground behind the nursery. No one could find out. He needed to figure this out alone. Cougarkit's head snapped up when he saw Wildjay call a few senior warriors to gather with him. Blazefur was called and the tom's head hung low as he padded over. Eagleshadow, Driftflurry, Stormbrew, Boulderthorn, and Whitecloud were called as well. Cougarkit strained his ears to listen.

"We have a serious problem. A mother fox is on ThunderClan territory too, but she's a lot more vicious and has four kits of her own. She has a very deep hole and Greenstar doesn't want any cat going near the part of the territory where the sun goes down. It's dangerous. She's dangerous. She also-"

He stopped listening. A mother fox! Cougarkit had a plan, but it wasn't the brightest one. He could avenge his mother's death by driving out this stupid fox and her kits. That's exactly what he'd do. Cougarkit watched as Mouseclaw, Vixenheart, and Snakejaw, the elders, picked up Ottertail but had trouble with Fawnfur. Twilightshock offered to help and they accepted.

Goodbye, Fawnfur. I'm going to avenge you. I love you.

When the elders exited camp Cougarkit, swift as a mouse, darting out of camp. It looked like no cat saw him so he was safe. The part of the territory where the sun goes down... He saw the sun high in

the sky, but it's progression seemed to be to a little bit of the left of himself. That's where he could find the fox.

He entered the bushes, looking at awe at everything around him. It was so huge - and amazing! He couldn't wait to become an apprentice. *I might just become an apprentice after I drive this fox and her kits out.*

Cougarkit felt a light breeze go by. Something flashed before him and he yelped, jumping back. A gray tom with bright, blazing yellow eyes sat before Cougarkit. His pelt was a bit see-through and stars could be seen in his fur.

"Wh-Who are y-you?" The tan tom stuttered.

"My name is Spiderhawk, an old deputy of ThunderClan. I have a prophecy for you. This is the only time it can come, young one. *'Of bright and dark, two cats shall be brought down from our ancestors. Only time can tell when they will figure out who they really are, but they shall meet in battle. If the brightness that shines loses, no cat will be safe anymore.'* Cougarkit, you must not share this prophecy with anyone, though you should never let it slip away from your mind. Thus keep it safe and remember - you're never safe." Spiderhawk swirled back up into the sky.

"I have to remember that prophecy... But what's it got to do with me?" He remembered his mission - the mother fox. "I can figure out what it means later. Right now I must do something about the mother fox!"

He began to run, slowly getting tired. His small legs didn't do too well in the forest. Maybe this hadn't been such a great idea. No! He needed to avenge Fawnfur. It was a great idea! A terrible stench hit his nose and he stopped dead in his tracks, but instead went flying forward. He landed in the mud and groaned, standing. What was that smell? Was it a fox scent?

He felt heavy breathing behind him and the musky odor. Cougarkit looked back and, with a look of horror, saw the fox. She was huge, larger than even Boulderthorn was. Much larger than Cougarkit. He backed away a little and her copper eyes followed him. A growl

came from low in her throat. She was half emerged from her hole. Suddenly Cougarkit noticed the white foam that dripped out of her jaws...

Rabies...

Cougarkit had heard stories that if a cat were to get bitten by rabies they would die... Or turn rogue and kill every cat around them. *Dear StarClan, this was a terrible idea!* He thought. He braced himself as the fox snapped at him, looking like she was about to kill him. Until he saw a flash of ginger fly over his head. Blazefur rammed into the fox, Wildjay coming in from the wing to attack. From behind Twilightshock helped. All the warriors were scratching at the fox, making sure not to be bitten at all costs.

Finally, they sent the fox away out of the territory, her kits following. Blazefur whipped to Cougarkit, running to him, rasping him in licks. "Dear StarClan... I was so worried... I thought I'd lost you too."

"Care to explain what you were doing out here, facing a fox with *rabies*?" Wildjay meowed, raising a brow and staring at Cougarkit. The tan tom looked down. "And how did you even know *about* this? Were you eavesdropping?"

"It's usual kit stuff," Twilightshock purred. "And look, he's perfectly fine. I think Cougarkit learned his lesson *not* to mess with a mother fox and her kits. Many kits get into mischief. This may have been bigger mischief but a hair on his pelt hasn't been touched."

"You have a point..." Wildjay sighed. "Come on, let's get you back to camp." Blazefur picked up his son and the three cats traced back to camp. It seemed like they knew their whole way around, and Cougarkit didn't even know where they were. He was grateful Twilightshock had saved him from a real lecture, though. That was the last thing he needed.

I'm sorry, Fawnfur. I couldn't avenge you...

When they returned to camp Cougarkit saw Silverkit staring at him in bewilderment. Lightpaw's eyes flashed with amusement.

Greenstar leaped down from his place and Wildjay met him. Cougarkit was happy to be placed on the ground. "You're lucky not to have been punished," Blazefur warned. "Don't do it again, Cougarkit."

"I won't," he replied.

"Promise?"

"Promise."

"Good."

Cougarkit was left alone. Some warriors shook their heads at him. The tan kit smiled sheepishly and ran into the nursery. His thoughts traced to the prophecy, then back to Fawnfur's death, and the black fur stuck between her claws. It meant something.

Then he realized something. He remembered yesterday when he had watched Lightpaw back away from Shadowpaw. Then he watched Darkpaw, Tigerpaw, and Ashpaw enter the apprentices' den. After, he never saw Shadowpaw in camp.

It only meant one thing.

Shadowpaw had killed Fawnfur.

Hey, actually finished this chapter! Yay :D I'm so happy it's done. So, what did you think about it? Now I want Fawnfur back, she was one of my favorite characters DX Nuu why am I so mean

Welp, that's that chapter. If you have any ideas for this book you can DM me and tell me. I might just include it because I have no inspiration XD

Anyway, vote and comment what you thought! StarClan does not light Shadowpaw's path ✧

Chapter 4

[image]

[Art by FoxyEverdeen]

Shadowpaw. That was Cougarkit's new enemy. The mysterious apprentice had killed his own mother. He wanted to tell someone - but he was just a kit. He didn't want to get in trouble or be ignored by his Clanmates. *I must keep this a secret*, Cougarkit thought. *I can't even tell Silverkit.*

He had begun to notice Dewpaw, the medicine cat apprentice, begin to sulk around. Cougarkit hadn't known Ottertail had been the orange tom's mother. *My mother died too!* He growled in his head, *and I'm not sulking around. He needs to get his head together!*

Cougarkit felt a pang of sympathy for the tom - he didn't have a cat to watch all the time, or a mystery to solve. Unlike Cougarkit.

The tan tom had heard of what had happened at the gathering last night. Apparently Crocodilestar, leader of RiverClan, had lost a life from Sharkstar. Cougarkit remembered a gathering was a time of peace, and he wondered why Sharkstar had taken a life from Crocodilestar.

"Cougarkit! Snap out of it!"

The tom turned his head to Silverkit, who purred. He batted at her playfully. Since the death of Fawnfur, Cougarkit had been staying in Kinkfur and Silverkit's nest so he wouldn't have to be alone. Kinkfur groomed his pelt when she finished Silverkit's.

"Today is your apprentice ceremony," Kinkfur pointed out. "Shouldn't you be excited?"

"Oh yeah! That's why you're grooming us!" He broke free from Kinkfur's rasping tongue and jumped around. "I'm going to be an apprentice! I'm going to be an apprentice!"

"All cats old enough to catch their own prey, gather beneath the Highrock for a Clan meeting!" Greenstar called out.

"Oh, look at you," Kinkfur sighed. "Your pelt is a mess. Whatever - embarrass yourself all you want." The brown queen purred, exiting the den with the two kits. Silverkit walked forward slowly and constructively, while Cougarkit bounded to the middle of his Clanmates. Kinkfur joined Driftflurry and Rockhide, watching the kits.

"Today is a very special day! We are going to have new apprentices." Greenstar looked down at Silverkit. "Silverkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Silverpaw. Your mentor will be Slateleaf. I hope he will pass down all he knows on to you." Greenstar watched as the black tom made his way to where Silverpaw was.

"Slateleaf, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You had received excellent training from Ottertail, and you have shown yourself to be intelligent and calm. You will be the mentor of Silverpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to her." Slateleaf bent his head down and touched noses with Silverpaw. The silver she-cat winked at Cougarkit as she went to join the crowd. Cougarkit felt his ears become hot. When was Greenstar going to make *him* an apprentice?

"Cougarkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed," the brown tabby leader finally began. "From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Cougarpaw. Your mentor will be Clawflank. I hope he passes down all he knows to you." Cougarpaw watched in awe as the large tom made his way from the crowd to him. He had a sturdy build and a chocolate brown pelt, his green eyes filled with pride. "Clawflank, you have trained your past apprentices well, and I expect you to pass down all you know to Cougarpaw." The tan tom stood on his toes to reach Clawflank's nose.

"Welcome to ThunderClan as an apprentice," Clawflank meowed, pulling away and leading Cougarpaw away from the crowd. Cougarpaw noticed Blazefur padding up to him.

"I'm so proud of you! You're already an apprentice. It goes by so fast," his father stated, purring and kicking the top of his son's head. "You'll be a great warrior, I know you will." Cougarpaw purred in return and followed Clawflank to the apprentices' den.

"We aren't going to do anything right now," the chocolate brown tom meowed to his new apprentice, "so you might as well rest or chat with the other apprentices and get to know them." Cougarpaw felt dread inside of him - he'd have to meet Ashpaw over again. And... Shadowpaw.

You can do it, Cougarpaw.

Silverpaw bounded to his side, purring. "Come on, let's go inside." She padded inside and Cougarpaw held his breath as he followed her. It was pretty dark, but the light illuminating from outside sure helped. He could see that Darkpaw and Tigerpaw were here, but didn't see Ashpaw, Shadowpaw, or Lightpaw.

"Hi!" Tigerpaw exclaimed, looking from Silverpaw to Cougarpaw. "It's nice to have some new apprentices in here."

"It's nice to be in here," Silverpaw replied back. Cougarpaw felt a little tried, although he didn't know why. Darkpaw, a light gray she-cat, rolled onto her back and yawned. "I'm tired," the she-cat complained.

"Then go to sleep," Tigerpaw snorted.

"I will," Darkpaw grumbled. She closed her eyes and Tigerpaw let out a purr. Silverpaw and Cougarpaw found nests - there were only two left. Silverpaw of course wanted to be by Lightpaw, so that stuck Cougarpaw by Ashpaw and Shadowpaw.

Oh great StarClan, I'm really dreading this now. He felt a rush of anger at Shadowpaw, and knew he could avenge his mother's death. *I can and I will.*

Cougarpaw laid down in his nest, trying not to get distracted with Tigerpaw's and Silverpaw's chatter. Soon he found himself drifting off to sleep. When he opened his eyes, he was in a forest. Not dark

or gloomy, but full of stars and a blue sky with clouds. He was in StarClan, that's all he knew.

"Cougarpaw."

The tan tom turned his head. A lithe, calico she-cat stood there. Her blue eyes showed immense pain and suffering but she stood up. "You haven't forgotten the prophecy, have you?" The she-cat inquired.

Oh, no! The prophecy! I totally forgot!

"Oh... Well..." Cougarpaw let out a nervous laugh but the she-cat narrowed her eyes, clearly not amused. "Cougarpaw, you *must* remember. StarClan and the Clans in your region depend on it."

"Well..." He thought for a minute, remembering the cat that had told him the prophecy. "Spiderhawk can just come and tell me-"

"Spiderhawk is dead!" The calico she-cat spat, her fur ruffled.

"Well, I know that, but-"

"No, Cougarpaw. He was killed. In StarClan. He's gone, forever."

Cougarpaw's eyes widened. "Killed? By who?"

"A Dark Forest cat named Russetstar." The calico bent her head. Cougarpaw felt sympathy for the poor StarClan cat. "Maybe if I show you, you'll understand better." Cougarpaw tilted his head but nodded slowly. He followed the she-cat out of the clearing and into the bushes. No scent was familiar, but when they reached the edge of the forest, Cougarpaw was filled with horror and dread.

A bit of StarClan's land was dead and withered, the sky above the dead StarClan fields a crimson color. Dark trees covered the area, and it looked like whatever it was wasn't stopping.

"This is horrible!" Cougarpaw exclaimed. The calico nodded. "This is the doings of the Dark Forest. They are taking over StarClan, and we cannot stop it. The fate of everyone depends on you, Cougarpaw. You have an enemy in ThunderClan, as if StarClan and

the Dark Forest are battling down there. You have a heart brighter than StarClan, but your paws may lead you in the wrong direction." She stared at him dead in the eyes. "You must not fail, or StarClan will be destroyed forever!"

Cougarpaw felt the world becoming dark, but heard one last echoing voice. *'Of bright and dark, two cats shall be brought down from our ancestors. Only time can tell when they will figure out who they really are, but they shall meet in battle. If the brightness that shines loses, no cat will be safe anymore.'*

DEAR STARCLAN I'm so sorry this chapter didn't come out sooner guys! I've been so busy and didn't have much time in the past few days. I've finally finished and I do hope you guys enjoyed it. The story is a bit boring right now but it'll get better after Cougarpaw attends his first gathering.

So anyway, please vote and comment what you thought, and may StarClan light your path!

Chapter 5

[image]

Cougarpaw slowly opened his eyes. His paws were sore from exploring the territory yesterday. His tail swished and he stood to his paws. Sunlight beamed down into the den and he exited, looking around. Not many cats were in camp, and he guessed they were either asleep or out on patrol.

"Cougarpaw, you're up," Clawflank purred, padding over to his apprentice. Cougarpaw nodded, looking up at his mentor. "So, what are we doing today?"

"I thought we should gather some moss for the elders," Clawflank replied. Cougarpaw's heart dropped. He had wanted to do battle training or hunting, not gathering moss for the elders!

"Do I have to? Can't we do something else... Like battle training or something?" The tan tom inquired.

"Gathering moss is just as important as everything else," Clawflank replied. "Come on." Cougarpaw sighed and reluctantly followed his mentor out of camp. He still felt small to the forest, and didn't yet know his way anywhere. The sun was creeping behind the trees and blue sky towered above them, but Cougarpaw noticed storm clouds in the distance. Rain? He hadn't ever seen rain, but it would be cool to see it for the first time!

"We're here," Clawflank meowed, stopping. Cougarpaw ran into his mentor and tumbled to the ground. He scrambled to his paws, shaking the moss off of his pelt. There was some moss around a tree and he felt a little bored already. Why did Clawflank have to make him do this? It was mouse-brained and aggravating!

"Now, this is how you gather moss." Clawflank demonstrated. "You outstretch your claws like this, and curve under and pull it out." Clawflank did this, gathering some moss. "As so."

Cougarpaw nodded slowly, watching Clawflank step back. He padded to where the moss was. It looked fairly easy. Cougarpaw unsheathed his claws and reached for the moss, but couldn't reach the trunk of the tree. He narrowed his eyes and reached his claws further, gripping the outside of the moss and clawing it away. His claws were already sore and he threw the moss off, looking at Clawflank. "There," Cougarpaw meowed, "now are we done?"

Clawflank shook his head. "No, we need enough for the elders' nests. This is hardly enough for a bird's nest."

"But my claws hurt!" Cougarpaw replied, lashing his tail.

"You'll get used to it," Clawflank meowed. "Calm down and continue."

"No! I can't calm down, I wanted to do battle training! At least something more fun!"

"There are ups and downs to being an apprentice, and everyone goes through them. Even I went thr-"

"Shut. Up!" Cougarpaw hissed. "I thought you could be a better mentor!" The tan tom turned and ran off. He didn't look back but continued running. He didn't know where he was going - he hoped to camp. His paws became sore and his claws were in pain. The one thing he hadn't noticed was how close to the border he was. Twoleg nests came into view and he came to a halt - his eyes widened. He had gone the complete opposite side of the territory he had wanted to be. *Ugh... I am so dramatic, aren't I? I ran away because I didn't want to gather moss for the elders! I'm such a mouse-brain.*

He heard rustling and snapped his head to the noise. His ears perked and he scented the air. ThunderClan scent and something else mixed. Suddenly, a large, dark gray tabby tom leaped from one of the white things that stuck up from the ground. He had bobbed ears like something Cougarpaw had never seen, and the tan tom jumped back to avoid the claws of this huge cat.

"What are you doing here?" The dark gray tom hissed. Cougarpaw took another step back and thought about running, but he didn't

want to look like a coward. The tom stood up taller, puffing out his chest.

"I'm exploring," he lied. "Who are you?"

"I'm Atticus, and I'm not a cat you want to mess with." Atticus growled, his long and sharp claws digging into the ground. "Leave now, or you'll pay the price, little kitten."

"I'm an apprentice of ThunderClan! I'm not a kit!" Cougarpaw had no idea how to fight, especially against a large cat like this one. Atticus let out a laugh. "Where do you live? In the wild?"

"Yes, actually. I do!" Cougarpaw exclaimed. Atticus's eyes narrowed and he hissed.

"Without a home to defend you're nothing! And guess what? You're a threat to my home. So now is the part where I rip you to shreds." Cougarpaw's eyes widened.

That escalated quickly...

The dark gray tabby bowled into Cougarpaw. The tan tom yowled as claws met his fur and dug into his skin. He managed to slip out of Atticus's grasp because of how much smaller he was compared to the kittypet, and leaped back to avoid a blow. Atticus lashed his tail, staring Cougarpaw dead in the eye. Was he finished? Then, Atticus leaped upon his back, the weight of this cat unbearable. Cougarpaw fell to the ground and gasped for air. Atticus smiled deviously and jumped off, grabbing Cougarpaw's scruff and throwing him onto the ground.

The wind was knocked out of Cougarpaw and he spluttered, standing up. His fearful eyes landed on Atticus before he made a run for the treeline. But the dark gray kittypet was there first, snarling.

Suddenly, a dark shape appeared from behind Atticus. He watched a brown cat smash into the dark gray one and tumble in a flurry. Cougarpaw watched and noticed who it was.

"Clawflank!" Cougarpaw yowled. He had never been happier in his

life.

Clawflank snarled at Atticus and backed away from the tom, guarding Cougarpaw. Atticus stood up, a little larger than Clawflank. His eyes narrowed. "You're protecting that puny lump of fur? Might as well let me kill him."

"You shouldn't kill cats just because they stray towards your home. *Atticus*." Clawflank spat his name out like a piece of rotten prey. Did Clawflank know this cat? Maybe they had fought before.

"Look, you look like you know me. I don't remember you, though, since I've fought so many cats." Atticus licked his paw and Cougarpaw growled at him. Atticus returned his gaze to Clawflank but the chocolate brown tom bowled into the dark gray one.

"Agh!" Atticus spat, raking his claws down Clawflank's side. Clawflank snarled and bit into his neck, shaking him, Atticus whirled around and knocked Clawflank off. Clawflank stood to his paws, snarling, eyes ablaze.

"Here, I'll give you this one time to leave. Just before I shred you. Unless you and your little kitty would like to die." Clawflank looked over at Cougarpaw and then back at Atticus.

"Very well," Clawflank meowed. "But I don't want to hear of you again. You're as close to our territory as we are to yours. And if you come in any closer, *we'll* shred you."

"You and what army?" Atticus snapped.

"Maybe you'd like to see, hmm?" Clawflank inquired. "Here, step inside our territory - then you'll know what army." Atticus growled and muttered something under his breath. He hissed at both cats and leaped upon the white thing, taking one more look before landing on the other side.

"Cougarpaw!" Clawflank hissed, grabbing him and dragging him into ThunderClan territory. They entered the treeline and Clawflank faced his apprentice. "I can't believe you did something that irresponsible! Do you know how worried I was? You can't fight

anyone, let alone a cat as large as *Greenstar* himself! You can't go running off and whining because you don't want to gather moss. The elders in our Clam need help, even if they are cocky and ungrateful about it. They can't help themselves! Consider this a lesson. And if you do it again, Greenstar will know about it."

Cougarpaw's ears flattened and he looked down. "I'm sorry..." He shook his head and looked back up at his mentor. "What about these scratches? Won't Greenstar know someone attacked me?"

"We can tell him you and I walked through some brambles." Clawflank shook his head. "You are a troublesome cat. You're not the worst apprentice I've had, but you sure get into a *lot* of trouble. Now, let's gather that moss and head back to camp."

Cougarpaw followed Clawflank. He felt bad that he had done that, but the past was the past. The two cats quickly gathered moss, heading back to camp. When they entered Wildjay stared at them, cocking his head. "What's up with those scratches?"

"Guess we walked through some brambles," Clawflank meowed through the moss. Amusement sparkled in the deputy's eyes. "Be more careful next time."

Cougarpaw watched the two lovebirds, Lightpaw and Silverpaw, talking in the apprentices' den. He caught sight of Shadowpaw, and his eyes narrowed.

You'll pay, Shadowpaw. I'll make you pay if it's the last thing I do!

AGGHHH sorry this chapter is so late... I've had no potential whatsoever to write, but decided to anyway XD

So, what do you think about Atticus? I love him, mostly for his attitude and because... Well... I just do! And how does Clawflank know Atticus? You'll find out soon! Maybe ;)

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed the chapter! Please vote and comment what you thought, and may StarClan light your path!

Chapter 6

[image]

"Hey! Where have you been?"

Cougarpaw laid down in his nest, looking over at Silverpaw, the one who had asked the question. He shrugged.

"Oh, you know, fighting territorial kittypets," Cougarpaw meowed simply, licking his paw. Lightpaw scooted up next to Silverpaw.

"Wait, you were battle training? I thought you were going out to collect moss today," Lightpaw meowed.

"I wasn't talking to you," Cougarpaw snapped to the annoying tom. "I was talking to Silverpaw." Lightpaw growled and narrowed his eyes, turning and flopping into his nest angrily. Silverpaw let out a sigh and shook her head, then returned her gaze to Cougarpaw.

"I don't want to hear your mouse-brained story if Lightpaw can't hear it," Silverpaw meowed, narrowing her eyes. "Lightpaw isn't bad, you just refuse to talk to him. Maybe you should branch out. Maybe talk to Ashpaw or Darkpaw. Don't you want kits? You can't have kits with anyone else, really, in the Clan. The only younger warriors are Lavenderwing and Stormbrew. And, well, Stormbrew doesn't like anyone, and Lavenderwing already has a mate!"

"Don't tell me how I should live my life," Cougarpaw hissed. He really was growing annoyed by Silverpaw. He stood up, ruffling his fur. "I am *not* going near Ashpaw. Ashpaw and... Shadowpaw..." He cringed after saying the name. "Are always together. And-"

"Why do you hate Ashpaw and Shadowpaw so much? What did they do to you?" Silverpaw asked.

"Shadowpaw..." He shook his head. "No, not Shadowpaw." Cougarpaw's eyes turned to slits and he clumsily walked out of the apprentices' den without another word. Grief overwhelmed him.

That's all he felt.

Shadowpaw really killed her... And what have I been doing all this time?

"I need some fresh air," he muttered to himself, heading toward the camp exit. Or... Entrance. Whatever you wanted to call it.

"Cougarpaw, where do you think you are going?" Clawflank called to him. "Well, we might as well go ahead and do a bit of battle training." Cougarpaw felt no happiness whatsoever. He didn't know why he received this sudden feeling of sadness, but it washed over him like darkness over the forest. The tan tom nodded, and followed his mentor out of camp. Clawflank flicked his tail. He looked up, watching the storm clouds floating closer toward them.

"Here we are, the sandy hollow," Clawflank meowed. He turned to Cougarpaw, sitting down. The tan apprentice did the same. "We're going to start simple. First, we'll start with the swipe and dodge." Cougarpaw nodded and watched his mentor. "Here's what you do. You simply scratch the cat in front of you on his or her face or muzzle, and jump back to avoid a blow from them." Clawflank demonstrated, although it was a little hard for one cat to do. "Now you try on me."

Cougarpaw sighed and sat up, fixing his gaze on Clawflank. He narrowed his eyes. Cougarpaw ran forward and growled, raising his paw in the air. Without control, his claws unsheathed and he brought them down on his mentor's cheek. Cougarpaw jumped back as if he were avoiding a paw swipe, but realized what he had done. Clawflank wiped the blood off of his cheek.

"Cougarpaw! What is wrong with you? You know we don't battle train with unsheathed claws!" Clawflank exclaimed, shaking the blood off of his face. Cougarpaw's ears flattened.

"I'm sorry, Clawflank," Cougarpaw replied. "It won't happen again. I don't know what got into me." Clawflank nodded. "You okay?" His mentor meowed. "You seem... Not committed. Down."

"I'm fine!" Cougarpaw snapped. "Let's just get on with it."

"I thought you wanted to battle train, though," Clawflank pointed out.

"I do, that's why I'm here," Cougarpaw muttered. He stepped back and sheathed his claws. "So, let's move on." Clawflank shook his head. "Alright. So next is leap and hold. A smaller cat, or an apprentice, like you will be able to do this against a larger opponent. Leap onto the back of the larger enemy and grip their back with unsheathed claws. Now, they can't claw you, since you are beyond their range. Try it on me - claws *sheathed*."

Cougarpaw immediately leaped onto the back of Clawflank. But, before even realizing it or having time to react, the chocolate brown tom dropped and rolled, squishing him under his weight. The wind was knocked out of the young apprentice and he scrambled to his paws.

"However," Clawflank continued, "watch out for the drop-and-roll move. If this happens, which it most likely will if you use this attack, make sure to try and jump free before you get squished. Or that will happen."

"Well, you could've told me before you squished me," Cougarpaw growled, looking up at his mentor.

"You needed to see what it felt like so it wouldn't happen, young one. Lessons are lessons. You sure have learned one today."

"Wait, I thought you weren't going to take me battle training," Cougarpaw inquired.

"I wasn't, but you looked angry in the apprentices' den so I decided it was for the best. Sometimes it's good to take your anger out." Lightning crackled above their heads and thunder boomed. His ears flattened. It sounded like StarClan was angry.

"Let's get back to camp. I'm sure you're still sore from today. Tomorrow we will battle train a little more." Cougarpaw nodded slowly and followed his mentor back to camp. Rain drops began to fall from the sky and the two cats hurried, running into camp. Mud splattered Cougarpaw's paws and he departed from his mentor,

entering the apprentices' den. He shook his fur out and sprayed Silverpaw with water. The she-cat spat at him.

"I just finished grooming my fur!" She exclaimed angrily.

"Don't talk to me if Fawnfur isn't here," Cougarpaw replied to the she-cat. Silverpaw cocked her head. "What? But Fawnfur is dea- wait a minute!" Cougarpaw ignored her and looked at Ashpaw and Shadowpaw. Shadowpaw turned to him with cold green eyes. Cougarpaw narrowed his eyes at the tom, flopping down into his nest. He decided he felt uncomfortable and scooted away from the other apprentices, flicking his tail. Darkpaw ran in and shook her fur, causing Silverpaw to grow wet again.

"Seriously!" Silverpaw cursed under her breath, but Lightpaw purred next to her and it looked like Silverpaw became happy again. The tan tom shook his head and placed his paw over his muzzle, looking at the side of the cave.

"What do you think our warrior names will be?" Tigerpaw piped up, his green eyes looking around curiously. Cougarpaw perked his ears, wanting to listen.

"I hope I'm Silverlight!" Silverpaw started, puffing out her chest and looking into Lightpaw's eyes dreamily. Cougarpaw rolled his eyes.

"I want to be Tigerleap!" Tigerpaw exclaimed. "What about you, Darkpaw?"

"Hmm... Maybe Darkspeck," she replied. "That sounds like a cool name!"

"Duh, I'd want to be Lightsilver," Lightpaw replied. "What else could I be?" He purred. Cougarpaw felt embarrassed for Lightpaw.

"Shadowclaw could suit me," Shadowpaw boomed in a rusty voice. He flicked his tail and his gaze turned to Ashpaw. Ashpaw shrugged. "Ashnight or something."

"Hey Cougarpaw! What about you?" Tigerpaw called to him. Cougarpaw grunted and turned away, staring at the wall.

"Someone's grumpy," Darkpaw teased.

"Agreed!" Silverpaw purred. "Come on Cougarpaw, lighten up."

"Seriously, don't be such a drama cat," Ashpaw meowed. "We're all getting real tired of it." Tigerpaw laughed, and so did Lightpaw and Shadowpaw. Silverpaw giggled, Darkpaw rolling her eyes. They kept talking about him and he pinned his ears to his head, growling. He finally lost it, turning and whipping his head to the apprentices.

"Have you lost your mother? No." He glared at Shadowpaw and went back to staring at the wall. Silverpaw and Tigerpaw exchanged glances.

"Someone really *is* grumpy," Silverpaw commented. The apprentices' den burst into laughter and Cougarpaw shook his head. "Shut up..." He murmured to himself. "I hate them... I hate them all."

Tigerpaw was laughing pretty hard, wheezing in laughter. Silverpaw got a chuckle from Shadowpaw. Cougarpaw looked at all of them and the den fell silent. He flicked an ear. "Stop."

"Or what?" Ashpaw cockily replied.

Cougarpaw stood up and the other apprentices watched in silence as he grabbed Ashpaw's scruff and dragged her to the entrance of the den, throwing her out into the mud and rain. The she-cat yowled and ran inside. They all burst into laughter except for Ashpaw and Cougarpaw.

"Watch out for Cougarpaw! He'll throw your tail outside!" Tigerpaw laughed. Ashpaw growled at Cougarpaw but he snorted at her. She got what she deserved, talking to him like that. Cougarpaw slipped back into his nest, closing his eyes. The laughter died down and they just began talking. The sound of rain and thunder actually calmed Cougarpaw. Darkness covered his vision and he fell into a sleep.

"Cougarpaw! Cougarpaw!"

He opened his eyes and found himself to be in StarClan. Once

again. He noticed someone in front of him. The calico she-cat with pained, unforgettable, blue eyes.

"You mouse-brain!" She smacked his cheek with unsheathed claws and he hit the ground, groaning.

"You forgot the prophecy. *Again*. Didn't you?" She snarled. "StarClan depends on you! And what are you doing? Sitting around, grieving about your stupid mother?"

"She is not stupid!" Cougarpaw hissed, jumping to his paws. "Why would you say that?"

"StarClan cats are dying and your mother could be next. Stop being so dramatic and get your life together!" She growled, but stopped short. "No! No! No no no no no!" Cougarpaw inquisitively turned around and the last thing he saw were a pair of amber eyes and unsheathed claws crashing right into him.

This came out faster than I expected! Yay! So what did you think? Sorry if it's a bit short, I'm going to start *trying* to make my chapters longer. XD

Well, I hope you enjoyed! Please vote and comment what you thought, and may StarClan light your path! ✧

Chapter 7

[image]

Cougarpaw was knocked to the ground and felt dizzy. He slowly rolled over onto his belly, standing to his paws, groaning. He shook his head and watched in horror when the ginger cat slashed his claws down the calico's throat. He watched it rip open and blood flew everywhere. The she-cat gurgled out blood and strained her claws, gasping for air, but she was suffocating on her own blood. She fell to the ground and rasped, desperately trying to breathe. Cougarpaw watched, not moving, as the aggressive she-cat stopped, her eyes turning dull.

"Serves you right, *Cypressfog*," the dark ginger tom snarled. He turned to Cougarpaw.

"Y-Y-You killed her!" Cougarpaw took a step back, shocked. "So easily! H-How?"

"Puny kit. It's not that hard." He licked the blood off of his paw, amber eyes glowing. "It's funny, I can't believe you're actually here." He narrowed his eyes. "Well, it doesn't matter. Come with me, kitty."

"No way!" The tan tom hissed.

"Oh, would you like to be killed to?" The larger tom showed his blood-stained claws. Cougarpaw's ears flattened and he reluctantly followed.

They exited the forest and walked along grass. Soon, the stretch of fields turned into darkness. Decayed trees, withered grass, crimson red skies. He gulped and followed the unknown tom onto the land.

"I-Is this the Dark Forest?"

"What do you think?" The ginger cat replied huskily. He looked forward but flicked his tail. "Faster, *come on*."

"I'm trying, but I just became an apprentice!" Cougarpaw hissed, trying to keep up with this cat. The ground felt dry and warm underpaw, and some spots often made him jump from the burning sensation. They stopped and Cougarpaw ran into the cat, falling to the ground. He quickly regained balance and looked at the forest. It was thick with shadows, blanketed with fog. A rotting smell coursed through it and Cougarpaw nearly gagged. *So this is the Dark Forest...*

The cat began again, the tan apprentice following close behind. A wide stretch of dark trees was ahead, until a large clearing came into view. He noticed a black she-cat fighting a crimson-red looking one. She raised her gaze to him and cocked her head at Cougarpaw. He slowly was seated beside the tom.

A large, strong-looking black tom leaped onto a rock situated in the middle of the clearing. Cougsrpaw strained his head and noticed a muddy greenish stream and wrinkled his nose. The black tom that looked ever so familiar smirked at Cougarpaw, then looked at the dark ginger tom. "You've done well." Cougarpaw looked at the ginger tom, wondering what his name was.

"Thank you," the mysterious cat replied, dipping his head. The black she-cat sat beside him and his fur ruffled. He looked over and studied her. A pure black pelt with dull blue eyes. He looked away quickly when she purred at him. He noticed a brown tabby tom with a white underbelly and frosty blue eyes.

"Hawkfrost..." He murmured under his breath. The elders had told tales of the viscous cat.

"What's your name?" The black she-cat piped up.

"Err, Cougarpaw..." The tan tom replied. "What about you?"

"Whisperpaw," she replied, puffing out her chest. She looked at him inquisitively. "I've never seen you before. What Clan do you come from?"

"Well, I come from ThunderClan. But I just became an apprentice so I haven't gone to a gathering yet," he replied. "What about you?"

"I come from RiverClan." Her eyes dulled more and she looked down. "My leader is Flamestar. I know yours is-"

"Silence!" The familiar black tom yowled. He watched the crimson-redish tom sit beside Hawkfrost with a hungry gleam in his eye, another familiar cat sitting beside him. Thistleclaw.

"Oh, Cougarpaw." Cougarpaw raised his head and looked at the black tom. "It's great to have you here." He had a toothy smirk. "Come here, below the rock." He obeyed, hoping not to get hurt. He only knew two battle moves. What would he do if this cat tried to kill him? The cat leaped down, landing in front of him.

"How do you know my name?" Cougarpaw demanded, becoming suspicious.

"Dear StarClan, you don't know who I am?" He smirked. "Cougarpaw. It's Shadowpaw." A look of horror came across the tan tom's face. "Shadowpaw! What? You're so much larger now! You're even larger than Greenstar!"

"I'm Shadowwhisker now," he replied, laughing. "And you're just a puny apprentice who knows two battle moves."

"How do you know that?" Cougarpaw replied, dreading the answer.

"I know a lot about you, Cougarpaw." He took a step back and watched Shadowpaw- Shadowwhisker's pelt begin to glow. His pelt turned an even darker black, specks floating in the air around. His eyes turned dark red and he laughed.

"You really are from the Dark Forest! But you deserve it, since you killed my mother!"

Shadowwhisker's eyes opened wide. "How do you know that?" He snarled.

"I know a lot about you, Shadowwhisker," Cougarpaw spat back. He unsheathed his claws. "Now please... Let me leave!"

"You're even worse than you now are as a warrior," Shadowwhisker spat, laughing. His red eyes began to glow. When his claws

unsheathed they looked as large as a fox's.

"What's my warrior name then, huh?" Cougarpaw challenged. Shadowwhisker got closer to Cougarpaw, as if he were going to talk into his ear, but lashed out and slashed him on the muzzle. "Mouse-brain," the black tom growled.

"Fox-heart!" Cougarpaw snarled.

"You don't want to call me that, kitty," Shadowwhisker warned. "I've done bad things to cats who disobey me."

"Yeah?" Cougarpaw replied in defiance. "Prove it!" That was probably the dumbest thing he had ever said.

Shadowwhisker lunged at him, knocking him to the ground. Cougarpaw felt adrenaline run through his veins. He thought about all the moves he could use, there were so many to range from.

Wait, what? I only know two battle moves! Where are all of these ideas coming from?

He decided not to question it and slipped out of his grasp, raking him on the muzzle. He leaped back to avoid a paw - as Clawflank had shown him - and leaped onto Shadowwhisker's back. The tom snarled and rolled over, but Cougarpaw was quicker, leaping off.

Shadowwhisker looked like he had had enough and leaped onto Cougarpaw's back. The black tom held Cougarpaw's head with his forepaws and knocked down his hind legs with his hindpaws, thus causing Cougarpaw to collapse. The weight of Shadowwhisker knocked the wind out of him, and it felt like he was fighting Atticus again.

"Stop!" Whisperpaw screeched, running over and knocking Shadowwhisker off. The black tom leaped to his paws. "Whisperpaw! Stay out of this!"

"No, you are hurting this poor cat! Let him go and I'll fight you instead," the she-cat replied in a low growl. Shadowwhisker looked at Cougarpaw and sat up, flicking an ear and lashing his tail. "Very well," he reluctantly agreed. "But I'm not like Crimsonpaw." He

smirked and Cougarpaw stood up, trying to shake the mud out of his pelt. Shadowwhisker's red eyes and much darker black pelt turned to their normal colors.

"This isn't the end, Cougarpaw. Watch your back, because I might be watching you right now," Shadowwhisker hissed, before darkness covered his vision once more.

Kind of short, sorry! Anyway, what did you think of the chapter? AND IF YOU KNEW WHO WHISPERPAW WAS THEN YOU'RE AWESOME!

Hehe. So, please vote and comment what you thought, and may StarClan light your path! ✧

Chapter 8

[image]

"Agh!"

Cougarpaw leaped to his paws, panting. His fur was ruffled and blood was splattered on the side of his fur. Silverpaw was staring at him, eyes concerned. *That blood... Did I carry it through my dream?* He quickly looked over at Shadowwhisk- Shadowpaw, who was fidgeting, clawing at the air. He must be fighting Whisperpaw.

"Cougarpaw... That blood appeared on your fur. Your face, it's clawed up. And so is Shadowpaw's," Silverpaw meowed. The other apprentices were asleep - thankfully.

"Silverpaw, I have to tell you something," Cougarpaw murmured. He couldn't hold anything in anymore. "Silverpaw, I-" Suddenly, Shadowpaw leaped up, panting. He stared at Cougarpaw and yowled, crashing into him.

"You!" Shadowpaw snarled. Silverpaw wasn't even helping!

Shadowpaw raked his claws down his face, biting into his neck and throwing him across the den. Cougarpaw hit the wall and the wind was knocked out of him. He hit the ground, and blood trickled out of his jaws.

"N-No!" Cougarpaw stuttered, watching the black cat pad up to him. He smirked, fangs dripping with blood. He lifted his unsheathed paw before Cougarpaw yowled, leaping up. He was back in the apprentices' den, in his nest. Silverpaw, Darkpaw, Lightpaw, and Ashpaw woke up, looking around fearfully. Tigerpaw looked at Cougarpaw. "What is it? Are there cats out there?" He glanced outside of the den, worried. Shadowpaw awoke and said nothing, wiping the blood off of his muzzle and pelt.

"Cougarpaw, what's up?" Silverpaw meowed, cocking her head at him. His mind trailed back to everything that happened. *Cypressfog!*

No! She's dead...

"Yeah, and... Why is there blood on you?" Tigerpaw inquired, pointing at his pelt.

"I... I don't know," Cougarpaw lied, quickly lapping up the salty blood off of his pelt. He cringed at the taste. *Dear StarClan, did I really just experience that?*

"Hey, Tigerpaw," Cougarpaw piped up to the older apprentice, "Have you seen a cat named Whisperpaw in RiverClan?"

"No, I haven't. Why?" Tigerpaw replied. Cougarpaw narrowed his eyes. Whisperpaw had looked older than him. "Well, I don't even know the other Clan leader's names. What are they?"

"Oh! WindClan is Larchstar," Lightpaw replied, and Cougarpaw huffed at the tom. *I didn't ask* you.

"ShadowClan is Sharkstar," Shadowpaw spoke, flicking his tail and staring at Cougarpaw.

"And RiverClan is Crocodilestar," Tigerpaw replied, finally. "Who is this 'Whisperpaw'? I haven't ever seen her at a gathering."

"I haven't either, and I've been to almost all gatherings!" Ashpaw boasted. Cougarpaw rolled his eyes but chuckled a little. He looked out of the den and noticed the moon was pretty low in the sky, and a dapple of colors spread over the sky.

"It's almost dawn," Shadowpaw meowed as he sat beside Cougarpaw. He saw a flash of something in Shadowpaw's eyes... Regret? Sympathy? He didn't really care. Any cat that murdered deserved to go to the Dark Forest!

"Yeah, I see that," Cougarpaw replied cockily, returning to his grumpy self. He exited the den and flicked his tail. Claw marks scorched his fur and he winced as he took a step. Clawflank spotted him and padded over. "You're up early." He noticed his limp and scratches. "Hey, you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm... I'm fine," Cougarpaw stammered. Clawflank sighed.

"Maybe you should stay out of training today."

"No!" Cougarpaw exclaimed, then he lowered his voice. "No... I want to do something."

"Only if you tell me what's going on. Then we can go hunting," Clawflank replied, flicking an ear. Cougarpaw looked down and nodded, following his mentor out of camp. They entered a clearing and Clawflank sat down, staring at his apprentice. "So?"

"The Dark Forest visited me... They attacked me." *That's all I need to say. It's believable enough, and it's quite true. They took me against my own will!* A huffed gasp echoed from Clawflank. "The Dark Forest? They're back?" His eyes widened. "Cougarpaw, you can't listen to them! They are just trying to manipulate-"

"Don't worry." Cougarpaw cut his mentor off with a paw. "They just attacked me, that's it."

"They still should have no right to do that!" Clawflank spat. His eyes softened at Cougarpaw. "I'm sorry that happened. And..." He sighed. "This is the right time for me to tell you." Clawflank closed his eyes. "Cougarpaw, not all things come easy. You should know that. I understand how much you've been through. But that shouldn't be stopping you from trying your best to become a warrior." Cougarpaw opened his jaws to retaliate but was cut off by Clawflank speaking again.

"Your Clanmates are avoiding you because you push everyone away. Fawnfur may be gone, but she's still watching you from StarClan. I believe in you, so please, keep on trying, or you won't have any friends. Loosen up. I know you can do it - do it for me, your mother, Blazefur, and so many others."

"I don't have that many others-"

"Do you know how many cats care about you? They want to help you but you refuse! Silverpaw wants to help you, Lightpaw wants to help you, and all the other apprentices!" *Not all of them...* "So please... Do it for me. For Blazefur. For Fawnfur." Clawflank's pleading gaze got to the best of Cougarpaw and he sighed. He had

to think. He didn't *want* to be mean, but something had overcome him.

"You're right. I've been rude. I've been snappy. I've been everything a mentor would *hate* in his apprentice. And I'm going to try and change. Maybe Blazefur will pay some more attention to me. He just... Seems to avoid me now, like everyone else." Cougarpaw smiled a little. "Thank you, Clawflank." He moved a little and winced from a cut on his side, although it thankfully wasn't deep.

"Do you want to visit the medicine den?" Clawflank asked.

"No, I think I'm okay. Let's go hunting now." Clawflank sighed but laughed. "Alright, *hunting*. That's it. Don't get in any fights with rabid kittypets, though!" Cougarpaw let out a chuckle. "Alright, then, let's go! I don't really know *how* to hunt though."

"Well, it's my job to show you," Clawflank purred. "We're in a good enough place for me to show you. Okay, so here's what you do."

Clawflank crouched down, close to the ground, his tail hovering just above the dirt. He bunched his muscles and leaped, as if he were leaping on prey.

"It's quite easy once you get the hang of it. Just make sure your tail never sticks up or swishes, or the prey will see you. You try." Cougarpaw nodded and slunk into the same position Clawflank had been in. He made sure not to move his tail and keep it just above the ground, and he slowly moved forward, then leaped.

"Great job!" Clawflank exclaimed. "Exceptionally well for your first time."

"Thanks!" Cougarpaw purred. He noticed that was honestly the first time he had purred in a really long time.

"Alright, now let's hunt some real prey." Clawflank smiled and flicked his tail, beckoning for Cougarpaw to follow. The tan tom nodded and jogged after his mentor. Clawflank stopped him with his tail, and Cougarpaw dug his claws into the ground to stop himself. "I smell a squirrel," Clawflank whispered. "Hey! See it up

ahead?" Cougarpaw squinted his eyes and noticed the dark ginger color of the squirrel. "I want you to try and catch that. I'll stay back and watch."

Cougarpaw nodded eagerly and crouched into the same position. He stalked forward, but accidentally stepped on a leaf. The leaf cracked and the squirrel dashed off. Cougarpaw raised his head and muttered a curse.

"Hey, it's your first time," Clawflank meowed, a little amused. "You're pretty competitive. How about you look for some prey yourself?"

Cougarpaw thought this would be best so he padded forward. He raised his head and sniffed the air, but all the scents mingled together. "I can't smell much," Cougarpaw meowed, turning to face his mentor. He chuckled. "Maybe I'm not just quite ready to look for prey myself."

"I guessed that, but I wanted to see what you thought. Follow me, I smell something over here." Cougarpaw nodded eagerly and followed his mentor. He could pick up the faint trace of a squirrel, since he'd smelled it earlier. "Hey! I smell a squirrel! Maybe it's the same one from earlier."

Clawflank raised his muzzle and sniffed the air. "You're right. It is the same squirrel! Nice work, Cougarpaw." Cougarpaw beamed a smile.

"Alright, since you smelled it, how about you try to go find it?" Clawflank advised.

"Okay." Cougarpaw padded forward. He raised his head like he had seen his mentor do so many times, and caught the scent of something different. He knew the smells of the forest, but this smelled so much... Darker. He couldn't really explain it. He shook it off as his mind messing with him and continued on. Cougarpaw stopped when he noticed the same squirrel he had tried to catch earlier bolting away from a nearby bush. Cougarpaw knew he had no time to slither into his hunting crouch, so he jerked his paws forward to follow. Cougarpaw ran after it as fast as he could, and he

felt the adrenaline race through his body. The tan apprentice could see the squirrel coming closer into sight and he leaped, crushing the squirrel beneath his paws. He didn't yet know how to kill it, so he was thankful his paws had done the work.

Cougarpaw thanked StarClan for the prey and picked it up. But when he turned around he was greeted by a set of claws, which pinned him down. "What are you doing in ShadowClan territory?" The cat snarled.

"S-S-Sorry!" Cougarpaw barely managed to stutter out. The cat was dark gray, with black tabby stripes and amber eyes. He tried to push the older apprentice off but failed. The gray tabby tom smirked and proceed to unsheathe his claws.

"Hey!" Clawflank thankfully arrived in time to save Cougarpaw's life, snarling and hissing at the apprentice. The ShadowClan tom leaped back from Cougarpaw, staring blindly at Clawflank.

"Clawflank! You never told me we were close to ShadowClan territory," Cougarpaw meowed, gathering himself and leaping to his paws. He fled to his mentor and turned to the ShadowClan apprentice.

"Exactly. ShadowClan and ThunderClan are interfered by a Thunderpath. To be in ShadowClan territory, you would have to run past the Thunderpath. Basically, *Gravelpaw* is in ThunderClan territory." Gravelpaw, whom his name apparently was, narrowed his eyes at Clawflank. He quickly attempted to snatch up the squirrel but Clawflank leaped forward, stopping Gravelpaw.

"I'm reporting you at the gathering," Clawflank snarled. "And get on your own territory!" Gravelpaw hissed at Clawflankf fur fluffing up, and sped away. Clawflank scoffed and looked at the squirrel.

"Sorry, Cougarpaw. You okay? And nice catch, by the way!" Clawflank meowed, allowing Cougarpaw to pick up his squirrel. Cougarpaw nodded happily and followed his mentor back to camp.

They arrived shortly after, the sun still low in the sky. It was still morning, and some cats were just beginning to wake. Clawflank told Greenstar about the mouse-brained ShadowClan apprentice, but Greenstar huffed a sigh and returned to his den. Cougarpaw frowned when he noticed Greenstar's lack of energy, and watched Wildjay and Clawflank exchange glances.

Cougarpaw boasted about his catch to Blazefur, who returned in a purr. "You must be feeling better, then?" His father asked.

"Yep! I'm sorry I've been so... Grumpy." Cougarpaw cat-hugged Blazefur and turned to see Silverpaw and Darkpaw talking.

"Hey guys," Cougarpaw tried to be as friendly as possible as he padded over. Lightpaw noticed his friendliness and cocked his head, staying where he was beside his mentor.

"Woah! Cougarpaw... Is that you?" Silverpaw inquired. "It can't be."

"What happened? You can't just be this happy so suddenly," Darkpaw nodded as she agreed with her friend.

"I just... Am..." Cougarpaw smiled and purred. He sat down beside his denmates and continued to talk.

Maybe things would *actually* turn out for the better.

OH MY STARCLAN GUYSSSSS

I AM SO SORRY!!

THE LEVEL OR SORRINESS I HAVE IS OVER 100!!!!

I have been so busy with school, and I have had *no* time to work on this book. I've also been unhappy with this chapter, so I've been re-writing it over and over.

I am dedicating this chapter to WattyWarriors , mainly because in their book review they included me and totally boosted my confidence! I really thank them for that! And I can't *actually* dedicate the chapter to you guys, I don't have my computer... Sorry! XD

So I really do hope you guys enjoy this longer chapter, I worked pretty hard on it. I hope you guys forgive me for being so inactive. Please vote and comment what you thought, and may StarClan light your path! ✧

Chapter 9

[Feel free to point out any mistakes, I'm WWWWAAAAY too tired to go through this whole chapter and find all the mistakes. Proofreading. Ugh.]

One Moon Later

Cougarpaw padded into camp boastfully, dragging a large, snow white rabbit behind him. Clawflank looked proud enough for his apprentice. He deposited the creature on to the fresh-kill-pile. Darkpaw, Lightpaw, Silverpaw, and Tigerpaw greeted the tan tom.

"Dang, you caught that?" Darkpaw inquired, looking at the rabbit.

"Yep! All by myself," Cougarpaw boasted, puffing out his chest.

"Of course he caught that!" Tigerpaw exclaimed, then lowered his voice. "We all know Cougarpaw is the best hunter..."

"Wait, did you just admit that Cougarpaw is the best hunter?" Silverpaw snorted.

"No I didn't!" Tigerpaw argued, his ears flattening. They all burst into laughter, except for Tigerpaw of course.

It had been a moon since Cypressfog had died - no, Cougarpaw hated comparing the past moon like that. Even if he hadn't really known Cypressfog, he still missed her. It had been a moon since Clawflank had talked with Cougarpaw, and he had made friends with Lightpaw, Darkpaw, Tigerpaw, and had apologized to Silverpaw and was now friends with her as well. They had been helping Cougarpaw through this past moon, which meant a lot to him.

But something else had been going on. Every cat in the Clan had noticed Greenstar's sudden depression. Wildjay, the deputy, had been thankfully taking action of what had needed to be done.

Greenstar had been mainly staying in his den, hardly coming out. Never going to gatherings, and never allowing anyone to see him. Though, no cat knew why Greenstar was so depressed. Cats had recently asked when Wildjay would appoint the new deputy, but he refused.

Another thing; although, it was probably only noticed by Cougarpaw. Anyway, something else had been going on with Appleheart's behavior. He hadn't really ever been joining patrols unless forced, and seemed to have a lack of really wanting to do anything for ThunderClan. He just didn't care anymore, which was very odd.

Now, Cougarpaw watched as Shadowpaw padded over to Appleheart, and they talked quietly. No other cats happened to notice except for the tan apprentice, and he grew very suspicious. *Anything going on with Appleheart and Shadowpaw means trouble.*

Appleheart suddenly nodded at Shadowpaw and broke away from the black apprentice, exiting camp. Cougarpaw attempted to follow but was called by Lightpaw, Silverpaw, Darkpaw, and Tigerpaw to share the rabbit with them. He reluctantly agreed and padded over, digging into the rabbit, not realizing how hungry he'd been.

Surprisingly, he heard Greenstar call a Clan meeting. Cougarpaw raised his head and watched intently.

"I have gathered you all here today to simply thank Wildjay for his hard work. He has done everything I haven't been doing. He has been taking everyone to gatherings. He has put up with *my* behavior. I... I know how great of a leader he will be." Greenstar looked over his Clan for a moment before stepping back. The large brown tom whispered something to Wildjay, although the apprentice couldn't hear it. Cougarpaw watched Darkpaw and Silverpaw exchange glances. Words spread through the Clan like a wildfire after Greenstar entered his den.

"What does he mean?"

"He must be going crazy!"

"No leader would say that except when they're going to die."

"Wait... Greenstar is going to kill himself!"

The Clan turned into chaos, cats yowling in panic. Eagleshadow, Stormbrew, and Jackalfrost attempted to run into Greenstar's den. Wildjay stopped the warriors, calling Twilightshock over to help him. Cougarpaw narrowed his eyes and pushed his way between the panic-stricken cats. *I must talk to Greenstar, even if he doesn't want me to*. He managed to make it through and reached the ThunderClan deputy.

"Wildjay, I must see Greenstar at once," Cougarpaw demanded.

The gray tom shook his head. "Greenstar told me to keep every cat out of his den. Sorry, Cougarpaw."

"No! Please! Can't you... Just go ask him or something?" Cougarpaw asked. Wildjay sighed and turned around, entering Greenstar's den. Cougarpaw heard murmuring and watched Wildjay exit.

"He agreed to see you," Wildjay muttered, beckoning the apprentice to enter the den. Cougarpaw dipped his head to Wildjay and entered. It smelled pretty terrible, but he pushed it to the back of his mind. Memories of his kit-hood flooded his mind, like the time he and Silverkit had played hide-and-go-seek and had seen Greenstar for one of the first times.

He was startled when Greenstar called his name. Cougarpaw noticed the silhouette of the large brown tom. The leader shook his bedraggled pelt and sat down, his green eyes flashing. The tan apprentice sat down as well, taking a deep breath.

"Greenstar, what's wrong? I know you're depressed, everyone does, but I want to help! I just need answers," Cougarpaw began.

"Cougarpaw, you're only eight moons old. You won't be able to understand what's going on in my life," the ThunderClan leader replied in a gruff voice.

"Everyone says that, but I've been through a lot too!" Cougarpaw exclaimed.

"Maybe. But other cats have suffered too. Even more than you could ever imagine." There was a deep look of grief and regret in Greenstar's eyes, but Cougarpaw wouldn't give in.

"But Greenstar... We need a strong leader for ThunderClan. You have to be strong! You can't be like this. Cats are worried for you and it makes ThunderClan vulnera-"

"You can't tell me what I can and cannot be," Greenstar snapped.

"Then maybe you shouldn't have become ThunderClan's leader if you're going to mope around all day!" Cougarpaw snarled. He instantly regretted his words. Greenstar was the leader of ThunderClan, and should be treated with respect.

No. Greenstar is ill and we can't have a weak leader.

Greenstar didn't reply to the apprentice. His gaze shifted to the bottom of the den. "You're right," he whispered. "What have I become?"

Suddenly, Cougarpaw heard outraged yowls outside. Greenstar stayed where he was but Cougarpaw darted out of the den.

There stood Appleheart. He was holding a wide stick of fire in his jaws. He dropped the stick to the ground and fire immediately began to spread. Fearful yet angry yowls could be heard from some of the cats that had grown up with Appleheart.

"Cats of ThunderClan!" Appleheart yowled. "I have decided this terrible Clan is no longer my home. We have a weak leader and mouse-brained cats in this Clan! I would rather be a rogue than put up with any of you anymore. So, this is my farewell to this Clan. Oh, by the way, I hope you enjoy my other little treat!" The ginger tom let out a sinister laugh. Cougarpaw watched in horror as a large badger stumbled up from behind the treacherous tom, snarling.

That's what Appleheart and Shadowpaw were talking about! It must've been!

The black-and-white creature swiped at Appleheart, but the tom dodged the blow. The badger must've taken more of an interest to

the other Clan cats, because it stomped inside, growling menacingly. Cats avoided the fire and leaped at the badger, attempting to protect their Clan

How in StarClan's name did Appleheart lead a badger here?

Cougarpaw watched Appleheart smirk and Wildjay snarled at the ginger tom. "Appleheart! You are now exiled from ThunderClan! If any of our warriors even *see* you, they have permission to kill you!" Appleheart said nothing as he turned around, fleeing into the forest. "Coward," Cougarpaw muttered under his breath, but he had more important things to take care of.

He noticed the fire nearing the leader's den. He ran inside of the leader's den quickly, yowling to Greenstar. "Greenstar! Appleheart just set the camp on fire and led a badger into the camp! We must leave before the fire spreads to your den!"

"No, you leave. I'll stay," Greenstar refused. They both now noticed the flames lapping at the entrance of the den.

We're trapped!

"Dear StarClan!" Cougarpaw exclaimed, although Greenstar looked unconcerned. *I can't die... I don't want to join StarClan yet!*

Ashpaw's POV

Ashpaw leaped at the badger, her claws piercing its skin. She watched Shadowpaw heroically leap as well, snarling and scratching the creature. Ashpaw yelped as she was thrown off, and she tumbled in the dirt. The gray she-cat stood up and shook the dirt out of her fur, ready to leap again. But something caught her eyes.

She stood straight again and looked toward her leader's den. She saw the fire covering up the exit of the den, and noticed movement. It took her a second to realize it was Greenstar and her annoying den-mate Cougarpaw who were stuck behind the fire. She hardly had time to leap out of he way to avoid being crushed by Woodfur, who was thrown off of the badger.

"Eagleshadow!" Ashpaw yowled to the closest cat as Woodfur ran off. She ran to the brown tom, eyes wide in terror. "Eagleshadow, Cougarpaw and Greenstar are in trouble! Look!" Ashpaw pointed with her tail toward Greenstar's den, and it took Eagleshadow a moment to spot the two cats.

"Dear StarClan..." The tom muttered. They dodged the badger and the gray apprentice followed Eagleshadow. He called Wildjay, Blazefur, Amberfern, and Stormbrew for help. He quickly explained to them the situation and the deputy's eyes grew wide. The six cats raced toward the den and Ashpaw suddenly felt a pang of guilt for Cougarpaw, but she pushed it to the back of her mind.

Cougarpaw's POV

Cougarpaw ushered his leader away from the fire and to the back of the den. His heart raced. Would they die? They were lucky the bottom of Greenstar's den was stone and not grass. Smoke entered he den and the tan apprentice coughed.

"Do not be scared, young one," Greenstar rasped to Cougarpaw. But Cougarpaw couldn't exactly agree with that.

"Well, of course I'm scared! I'm actually terrified! I'm afraid of dying..." Cougarpaw meowed. *Unlike you...*

"You don't get to control your destiny," Greenstar hissed. "StarClan does the job for you."

"Well maybe I want to do it myself!" Cougarpaw snapped back. He sighed and decided to keep his jaws shut. Cougarpaw was relieved when he heard voices outside of the den. They'd be saved!

Ashpaw's POV

The cats raced to the fire. "So how do we get them out?" Stormbrew inquired.

"I'm not sure," Wildjay replied.

"We should scrape the top of the den until we can enter!" Amberfern exclaimed, her eyes lighting up from her "grand" idea.

"Don't be mouse-brained," Eagleshadow hissed. "Our claws would never be sharp enough for that! Besides; even if it did work, it would take too long and the den would cave in on them and crush them."

"Yeah? And how do you know it won't work?" Amberfern snapped.

"Do you want your Clanmates to die?" Blazefur snarled, joining in.

"Never!" Amberfern retorted.

"Guys, can you just shut up?" Stormbrew meowed, but it didn't do anything except cause them to grow louder and argue more.

"Dear StarClan! Just shut your jaws!" Wildjay yowled, stopping their arguing. "Stop acting like bickering kits! If you say you don't want Greenstar and Cougarpaw to die, then you need to make up your mind and hurry up!" The warriors exchanged glances and Wildjay sighed. "You cats are impossible..."

Stormbrew backed away when she realized how much of the fire was spreading. "Greenstar! Cougarpaw!" Stormbrew called into the fire-covered den. "Are you guys still okay?"

"Yeah!" Cougarpaw called after a second. "But you might want to hurry! The smoke is getting worse in here!" The tan tom coughed and Ashpaw jumped back from the fire.

"What will we do?" Stormbrew meowed, looking back in the den.

"Let's just leave, then," Amberfern meowed quickly. "It's useless. The fire is too high for any cat to jump through! Really, let's just leave them before our own tails catch on fire."

Blazefur snarled and opened his jaws to speak, but Wildjay spoke first. "Amberfern! Is that any way to act like a ThunderClan warrior?" He hissed. Ashpaw looked back and noticed the badger being driven out of the camp.

"Go with the others if you aren't going to help," Wildjay growled to Amberfern.

"But–"

"Now!"

Amberfern's ears pinned back to her head, and without a word she turned around and padded to the camp. Wildjay turned back to the den.

"There's nothing we can do." Ashpaw coughed, cringing at the rising smoke.

"We have to go..." Eagleshadow meowed, looking at his paws.

"But Cougarpaw–" Blazefur stopped, eyes widening. Wildjay took a step back. "Look, it's true. If we stay here any longer we're going to burn to death. Maybe Amberfern was right–"

"No!" Amberfern raced back, stopping at Wildjay's heels. "We can't just leave. Wildjay, you were right. We must save them."

"There's no way to save them–we must leave! I'm still deputy, and I know if I don't make it the Clan will be chaos," Wildjay countered.

"No. I'm doing this, whether you like it or not." Ashpaw watched the she-cat in fear. What would she do?

Suddenly, Amberfern took a step in front of the cave, narrowing her eyes. She unsheathed her claws and got ready, as if she were going to leap.

"Amberfern..." Blazefur came up, resting his tail on her shoulder. "You don't have to do this..."

"To make it up? I sure do. And he's your son, Blazefur. Our leader is in there. If no one else is going to do it, then I will."

Blazefur's eyes looked hurt. Ashpaw could see it–he loved his son, but *he* had wanted to save him. He also probably didn't want Amberfern doing this, as Ashpaw guessed the two had been close, since they probably hadn't been that far in age.

Eagleshadow said nothing and Stormbrew looked cautious as she

leaped into the den. Ashpaw could hear the yowls of the warrior, who's pelt blazed in the flames.

She managed to shield Cougarpaw and came out with him, dropping him on the ground. She suddenly collapsed onto the ground, twitching and yowling in pain. Only the crackles of the flames could be heard.

Cougarpaw's POV

Cougarpaw felt like the luckiest cat in the world.

Amberfern had just saved his tail. He looked back inside the den, and noticed Greenstar... Now his own leader couldn't be saved!

No.. He thought. *All of this. All about talking to him. And for nothing? He's not coming? He won't be saved? This can't be happening! We must save him!*

His attention turned toward his savior, Amberfern, and Eagleshadow and Wildjay were putting the fire out with their bare paws.

That must really hurt...

Amberfern's eyes snapped back open, and she coughed up smoke. Her eyes shone up at Wildjay, who looked just as much hurt as anyone still in the camp.

"Ashpaw, Cougarpaw, go!" Wildjay hissed.

"But Wildjay–" Cougarpaw began.

"No! I said leave!" The gray tom hissed.

Ashpaw dipped her head but Cougarpaw was more reluctant to follow. As they ran off to the exit of camp Cougarpaw hung back to listen.

"I'm sorry I-I have to leave you s-so soon..." Amberfern murmured, eyes closing, her breath coming out as hoarse. "B-But I feel like I possibly did the right thing. M-Maybe this time I did. I couldn't save

Greenstar, b-but I saved an apprentice who might even grow up to become a great l-leader someday."

Is this what it means to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life? He thought.

Cougarpaw caught one last meow from the amber she-cat, and he looked back to watch the scene.

Her eyes blinked up to the deputy, the fire growing larger and larger with each heartbeat. "He's saved," she murmured. "And now I may rest in peace."

Cougarpaw couldn't listen anymore, and he turned tail and ran as fast as he could out of camp. Two, or maybe even more, great cats had just died today. Especially when they never even deserved it.

Cougarpaw shook his head in both anger and confusion. Why Greenstar? Why did StarClan have to take him? It didn't make sense! None of it did!

He reached the top of the ravine and was about to dash into the forest before he noticed a gray pelt out of the corner of his eye. He twisted his head to the side to look, and there stood Ashpaw, balancing on a not-so-sturdy tree trunk that had probably fallen. It was laying across the top of the gorge, and Ashpaw was standing right on it, frozen as she stared down into the camp.

Cougarpaw quickly ran to the side of the tree trunk. "Ashpaw!" He called, but she acted as if she hadn't heard him. And maybe she hadn't. "*Ashpaw*!"

He noticed the cats below running out of camp, and he looked back at Amberfern's dead body that was being lapped up by the orange - red flames.

"*Ha*!"

Cougarpaw nearly jumped out of his fur and whipped around, facing the one and only Appleheart. He let out a maniacal laugh, green eyes narrowing and a smirk plastered across his jaws.

"Cougarpaw. Come with me. We can rule the forest–take over the Clans. Be the most powerful things the Clans have *ever seen*!" The tan apprentice could see a madness in him, like he had no one else before. This cat was truly crazy, and Cougarpaw *really* wouldn't want to be spending his last days by the cat who killed both his leader and Clanmate.

"Never!" The apprentice spat, fur fluffing up twice his size. "I'd never go with a cat this evil–especially the likes of *you*!"

Applefur was enraged and he grabbed Cougarpaw's scruff, sinking his claws deep into them. The tan tom's green eyes opened wide and he let out a yowl of pain, blood trickling down his neck and falling to the ground. The ginger tom let go of him and threw him into the tree branch.

"You should've chosen to come with me," Appleheart hissed, before smashing one of the sides of the tree branch, and watching both apprentices fall to the ravine. With one last look, he turned tail and ran–just like the coward he was.

Cougarpaw felt like there was a rock in his stomach. The wind whooshed past him and at the last second before he hit the ground, he unsheathed his claws and grappled onto a rock sticking out of the side of the ravine. He could see the flames growing closer and in fear, he scrambled up to the best of his abilities, raking his claws against the hard rock and hoisting himself up.

"*Ashpaw*?" He called, but the flames were too loud for his voice to be heard over them. He peeked over the edge and noticed Ashpaw on the ground, though breathing, her leg was twisted at an awkward angle.

Is... Is her leg broken? His eyes widened. *I'm lucky, because that should be me down there.*

He could see the gray smoke rising into the sky, and he let out another cough. Honestly, this didn't feel much different from just a few minutes ago, when he'd been trapped in that den with... Greenstar.

He heard yowls and looked down. There was Blazefur and Eagleshadow, coming to their rescue!

"Blazefur!" He yowled at the top of his lungs. "I'm over here!"

Blazefur managed to catch that and looked over at his son. "Cougarpaw!" He replied, running to him. He nodded to Eagleshadow, who picked up Ashpaw in his jaws by her scruff.

Cougarpaw could hardly feel the pain of Appleheart's bite, or the fire about to eat him up as his father was coming to save him.

"Just jump down!" His father commanded. "I'll catch you."

Cougarpaw didn't know. Couldn't he just come up here and save him? *Well, mousebrain, you'll have to jump down either way*, a voice told him in his head.

Blazefur and Eagleshadow looked up at him expectantly. *Just... Take your time. Steady heartbeat. Just leap to him. What's the worst that could happ–*

"Just jump already!" Eagleshadow hissed, and Blazefur snorted.

Cougarpaw did as the warrior said. He leaped down and when he thought he was going to his the ground, Blazefur leaped up and caught him in his scruff. He let out a breath he hadn't even known he'd been holding. He muttered a "thank you..." but got no reply, so he guessed his father hadn't heard them.

They turned tail and ran out of the camp. Cougarpaw looked over at Ashpaw, who seemed to be unconscious, and he flattened his ears. Had it been his fault? Maybe if he had gone with Appleheart, she wouldn't probably hate him even more than she did.

But it's her fault she was on the tree branch! He hissed inside his head. *She was eavesdropping on Amberfern and everyone! If she hadn't done that, then she wouldn't have broken or dislocated he leg!*

He sighed and shook his head, closing his eyes. When he opened them again they were running through the familiar forest, which luckily hadn't caught on fire.

They reached a make-shift camp, and his father set him on the ground. He looked around, cats filing around, Blackwing and Dewpelt(Dew*paw*? Anyone care to do some research in the past chapters and tell me? XD) healing some burned cats, or others with nasty wounds from the badger.

Cougarpaw stood up, and even though his muscles screamed in pain, he refused to just lay there. He had to help, in some way or another.

He limped over to where Silverpaw, Lightpaw, Tigerpaw, and Darkpaw sat. Darkpaw's eyes caught him first, and she ran over to help him. Lightpaw did the same, and in a bit of embarrassment and anger he went faster and sat down.

"Are you okay?" Silverpaw asked him, blue eyes wide.

"I'm okay..." The tan apprentice huffed. "A bit burned, and bitten, that's all."

Silverpaw narrowed her eyes and Tigerpaw peeked over her shoulder. She looked through his fur and noticed the bite that Appleheart had given him.

"That's not a badger bite," she examined. "Who bit you?"

"Was it Appleheart?" Tigerpaw quickly said, eyes widening in fear as he looked around, as though the ginger tom would leap out of the foliage and come grab him and drag him away himself.

"No, it was when Amberfern saved me from the den," he lied. He didn't want to scare them about how dangerous Appleheart was, even if he was a coward, and make it seem like he was going to be around every corner.

"Oh. And Amberfern! Greenstar! Where are they?" Lightpaw asked, padding up and sitting by Silverpaw.

Cougarpaw had actually *just* managed to forget about them for a while, but now he was reminded of them. He looked at his paws and hung his head low. Darkpaw's eyes widened. "Th...they're dead?" She asked in a murmur.

He looked up at his four friends as they gazed at him expectantly. He opened his jaws to reply until a call filled the forest. "Everyone! Gather beneath my call!" Wildjay yowled.

He quickly scrambled away and sat beside Blazefur, and Icehaze flanked him on his other side. All eyes followed Wildjay's movements, and he sat down on a tree branch. Even he looked like he was grieving inside, but Cougarpaw knew he probably couldn't show it, as he was going to be ThunderClan's new leader.

"Everyone," the gray tom began. "I have bad news to bring you." Murmurs swept through camp, but Cougarpaw already knew.

"Greenstar and Amberfern are dead."

Yowls erupted into the forest from his Clanmates, and he flattened his ears.

"No! Greenstar is dead?"

"He can't be!"

"How do we know for sure?"

"This *can't* be happening!"

"Quiet!" Wildjay yowled, and the make-shift camp fell silent.

"We will sit vigil for them when we return to our camp, though I do not know when that will be." He paused. "And even through this hardship, we will welcome new warriors into ThunderClan." The Clan grew a bit excited and Cougarpaw turned his head toward Shadowpaw, Tigerpaw, and Darkpaw. His eyes floated to Ashpaw, who was awake, but realized she wasn't getting her warrior name.

She has to heal, he thought. *Oh dear StarClan, she's going to literally* kill *me.*

"Shadowpaw, Darkpaw, and Tigerpaw, step up." The black tom, Shadowpaw, puffed out his chest fur in pride, *almost as if he deserved it.*

Cougarpaw held back a hiss of anger. He still hadn't forgotten what he'd done to Fawnfur, and especially how he had probably planned with Appleheart about setting the camp on fire and leading the badger in.

"Shadowpaw, Darkpaw, and Tigerpaw, you all fought exceptionally well against the badger. Ashpaw, even though you aren't getting your warrior name right now, after you heal it will he granted to you. Shadowpaw, Darkpaw, and Tigerpaw, it is time for you to receive your warrior names. Shadowpaw, step up."

He paused, jumping down from the tree branch and landing on the ground in front of the black tom. "I, Wildjay, deputy of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. He has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend him to you as a warrior in his turn.

Shadowpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

Shadowpaw nodded. "I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Shadowpaw, from this moment on, you will be known as Shadowwhisker. StarClan honors your courage and initiative, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan." Wildjay rested his broad muzzle on the newly-made warrior's head, and Shadowwhisker licked his leader–no, deputy's head in respect.

"Darkpaw, step forward. I, Wildjay, deputy of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. She has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend her to you as a warrior in her turn.

Darkpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend this Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

Darkpaw didn't hesitate. "I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Darkpaw, from this moment on, you will be known as Darkcloud.

StarClan honors your independence and patience, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan." He rested his muzzle on her head, and she licked his shoulder, disappearing back into the crowd of cats.

Cougarpaw could simply see Tigerpaw shaking in excitement. "Tigerpaw, step up." The black-striped tom did as he was told. "I, Wildjay, deputy of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. He has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend him to you as a warrior in his turn.

Tigerpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend this Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Tigerpaw, from this moment on, you shall be known as Tigerflame. StarClan honors your warmth and energy, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan." Again, Wildjay rested his muzzle on his head, and Tigerflame licked his shoulder in respect.

He went and stood beside Shadowwhisker and Darkcloud. "Shadowwhisker! Tigerflame! Darkcloud!" The Clan cheered countless times before it soon died down and warriors went back to their duties.

Cougarpaw sighed, a bit jealous he hadn't gained his warrior name. Then he realized Tigerpa–Tigerflame and Darkcloud would no longer be in the apprentices' den. Cougarpaw, Lightpaw, and Silverpaw went to go congratulate the three warriors. Although, Cougarpaw only congratulated Tigerflame and Darkcloud; he felt no excitement toward telling Shadowwhisker.

He turned around and headed toward the nests cluttered in the side of camp. He was suddenly stopped by Ashpaw, who called his name in a hiss. He turned his head to her, narrowing his eyes. "Yes?" He asked her.

"You..." She hissed in annoyance. "Just look what you did! Now I

can't become a warrior until I'm fully healed!"

Cougarpaw's ears flattened. "Ashpaw, I'm sorry, but I didn't do anything–"

"It doesn't matter anymore," he hissed. "All you are is a disgrace to the warrior code!" Cougarpaw didn't reply as he let out a quiet sigh, padding to his nest and slipping inside of it. He was tired, almost lonely perhaps, and he laid there for what seemed like hours before he was able to fall asleep.

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When he awoke warriors were gathering around Wildjay. He lifted his head and eavesdropped, wondering what they were taking about.

"We can't go to RiverClan, as we'd have to cross the river," he heard Wildjay saying to the senior warriors. "And we can't go to WindClan, because it's too far. We'd never make it, especially Zephyrbreeze and Bubbleflame, who are already pregnant."

"ShadowClan?" Eagleshadow spat. "And Sharkstar? I'd rather go to *SkyClan* then have to take shelter in that horrible Clan!"

"We have no other choice," Clawflank countered, nodding to Twilightshock.

"Then we must go to ShadowClan," Wildjay meowed grimly. "Because we need food, water, and shelter. Who knows? Bubbleflame could have her kits any minute now."

Cougarpaw slipped out of his nest and stood up, stretching. Wildjay looked around, then leaped onto the tree branch. "Everyone! Gather beneath my call!" Cats began to wake up and sleepily make their way under the tree, and Cougarpaw sat near the back.

ShadowClan? With Sharkstar? He shook his head. *Dang, I was really hoping to go somewhere else.*

When all cats gathered, the deputy began. "We are going to have to take shelter in ShadowClan." Cats began to look angry almost
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immediately. *I mean, I understand Sharkstar isn't great, but why does almost* everyone *here hate ShadowClan?*

"We can't go to RiverClan, as we'd have to cross the river, and WindClan is too far," Wildjay continued. "And it's already decided that we are going to travel to ShadowClan."

"Will they take us in?" Stripebelly asked.

"I hope," Wildjay meowed, but was cut off by Swanspiral.

"Will you pick a deputy soon? It's after moonhigh."

Murmurs of agreement swept through the camp.

"What? No!" Wildjay exclaimed, bewildered. "Even if Greenstar *is* dead, I'm going to name my deputy at *home*. Not in the forest."

Swanspiral looked content. Wildjay nodded. "Now, we are leaving. Gather everything you need. If the medicine cats need help, make sure to help them. If the queens need help, help them. Elders? Help them."

Warriors nodded and went off to help whoever they needed. Cougarpaw was called by Dewpelt(*paw*?) to help carry some red berries.

Dewpelt immediately turned to him, narrowing his eyes. "Cougarpaw, I need you to be *extra* careful with these. I can't carry these because there are delicate herbs I must carry, but these are the most dangerous."

Cougarpaw looked at the red berries. Why were they so dangerous?

"But why must I be careful?"

"Only carry them by the stem. These are called *deathberries*. Even if you swallow one, you will die soon after." He dipped his head and left Cougarpaw with that horrible thought, as he slowly picked up the deathberries. He almost ran into Shadowwhisker, who widened his green eyes at Cougarpaw.

Shadowwhisker snorted. "Deathberries, eh? I see you got the lowest of the low job." He raised his muzzle and stalked away from him, padding beside Wildjay.

Is he just trying *to already become deputy?*

Cougarpaw shook his head. He didn't know, and he didn't care. After everyone was pretty much ready, ThunderClan set out. He examined the forest, noticing the tweeting of birds. But there weren't as many as usual. Not at all.

The fire had scared them away, the tan tabby apprentice thought grimly. *Prey will be scarce once we return.*

He sighed and continued on, making sure to be careful yet firm with the deathberries, so he didn't either drop them or swallow them. *"These are called deathberries. Even if you swallow one, you'll die soon after." Now let me return to my job of carrying some comfrey or dock, so you might die and I'll be just fine! Because StarClan forbid I get hurt at all, even if I know how to treat myself!* He spoke about Dewpelt sarcastically in his head.

They soon reached the Thunderpath, and Wildjay looked back. He led them by the side and the ground dipped down into a leaky tunnel, and Cougarpaw flicked his ear. *Can ShadowClan cats get through here as well?*

Of course they can, mousebrain! It leads to the other side!

He shook his head in annoyance, padding through the dark tunnel. Although it wasn't very long, the gross water and smells were horrible, but he managed to push past it and just try and smell the deathberries–although they hardly smelled.

They finally made it on to ShadowClan territory, which felt even worse than the tunnel. Mud and wet moss squelched beneath his paws, and he squinted his eyes. This felt horrible, and he tried to flick it off of his paws, but with every step it grew more.

Dang, this sucks.

They continued on, and Cougarpaw looked around. ShadowClan

territory was a lot different from ThunderClan territory. Sure, it had a forest, but even then, it was more of a marsh with all the mud underpaw. Mods grew around nearly every corner, and the territory was pretty dark anyway.

He could hear Wildjay and Shadowwhisker talking.

"We're nearly to the camp," Wildjay meowed. "Do you think they'll let us in? I'm not sure if it this such a great idea."

"Trust in yourself, Wildjay. I'm sure they'll let us in."

He is *trying to act all nice and supportive to become deputy! I knew it!*

He made sure not to drop the deathberries as they neared the camp. Until suddenly, yowls were heard around the ThunderClan cats, and cats leaped out of the bushes and onto their opponents.

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A/N: This is definitely the longest chapter I have EVER made, out of ANY of my books. I do hope you like it; I made it so long just for you guys (not really, but for the sake and detail of the chapter I did)!

I really hope you liked it. It took me three months to do this. I mean, the first two I hardly did any work, maybe the first 28 pages, and the rest I did today. So I just finished about 47 pages today. Damn.

Record for me!

Anyway, what do you think?

Who's your favorite character?

I'd love to know! This chapter is pretty long, and if you don't like long chapters, my apologies.

Anyway, please vote and comment your thoughts, and may StarClan light you path! ✧

Chapter 10

[image]

/ / Amazing art of Cougarstripe by @/Moon_Cloud – go check out her most recent art book!! / /

Cougarpaw yowled as he was knocked over. A fire burned inside of him. *ShadowClan have no right to attack us!*

Cougarpaw snarled and flung the she-cat off, who landed with a thud on the ground. She stood up, shaking her golden pelt. She was definitely an apprentice, and was about the size of Cougarpaw, maybe a little bit larger. The apprentice growled and leaped at Cougarpaw. The tan tom leaped out of the way, watching the clumsy she-cat land in the mud. She quickly whirled around and clamped her jaws on his tail. Cougarpaw yowled and the she-cat pinned him down.

She's heavy. I need a plan.

Cougarpaw let his muscles rest, acting as if he had gone unconscious. The she-cat released her grip and the tan apprentice slithered out of her grasp, leaping around and batting her muzzle.

"Lionpaw!" A cat yowled, running over to help. This was definitely a warrior, and Cougarpaw's eyes grew wide. This warrior was a large, fully snow-white tom with glowing yellow eyes.

I know this cat! What's his name? Cloudedsun? I think that's it... Well, whatever his name is, I know he's the deputy... Do I have to fight against two cats alone?

"Stay away from my apprentice!" Clawflank yowled and leaped to Cougarpaw's side. "Cloudedsun, you should know better than to allow yourself and Lionpaw beat up Cougarpaw for the sakes of nothing! We haven't done anything wrong! We need shelter, and–"

"Shelter? From *what*?" Cloudedsun spat.

"Our camp... It's burned into nothing but ashes," Cougarpaw but in. "We didn't want to fight, we just need shelter for the night."

"Can't you just rebuild your camp starting tonight?" Lionpaw questioned.

"It's still burning!" Clawflank snarled to Lionpaw. "And there's a badger loose on our territory as well!"

"Well, you are on our–" Cloudedsun was cut off by Clawflank.

"Yeah, a whole Clan, elders, kits, queens, medicine cats and all, are fighting and trying to destroy your Clan! That's a pitiful excuse, Cloudedsun. You need to tell your fox-hearted leader to stop this madness over nothing!" Clawflank hissed, fur standing on end.

Clawflank would be a good leader, Cougarpaw thought.

Cloudedsun had a grim expression on his face. "Yes, I will go find Sharkstar right now." He ran off but was flung back into battle with a yowl. Cougarpaw was knocked over to the side and it seemed like the ShadowClan warriors were *dragging* them away.

"No! Stop!" Cougarpaw whirled around to face a gray tom with copper eyes and a very long tail.

"ThunderClan scum, get off of our territory!"

Cougarpaw raked his claws down this apprentice's muzzle, and let out a hiss when the tom leaped on his back and sunk his claws into his skin. Cougarpaw snapped at him, but he was too far back for Cougarpaw to reach, and he dropped on the ground and rolled. He managed to squish the tom and leaped back to his claws, sinking his claws into the gray tom's exposed belly.

Cougarpaw yowled when the ShadowClan apprentice raked his claws down his left eye, and he staggered back. Blood flowed his left vision and he could hardly see as the apprentice landed blows to his side.

"We're not trying to invade you!" Cougarpaw spat.

"Sure you aren't!"

Cougarpaw wasn't going to be beat up by a cat when he hadn't even done anything.

He whipped around and raked his claws over the tom's ear and it ripped in half, blood trickling down his face.

The tables had turned.

Cougarpaw hissed and sunk his teeth into the tom's leg as he tried to claw him. The tan tom raised his paw to land another blow but the gray apprentice clawed at his stomach.

The tan tom felt rage and he leaped forward, sinking his claws into his throat.

No... Stop!

He felt some type of power. He could kill this cat if he wanted to. This ShadowClan apprentice's life was in his paws right now.

'Don't let it corrupt you...' A voice whispered in his head. *'You're stronger than this, Cougarpaw... You have nothing against this cat. Let him go.'*

The way she said Cougarpaw...

Fawnfur? The ThunderClan apprentice thought, but there was no reply. He sheathed his claws and hopped off of the gray apprentice, who hissed at him.

"You nearly killed me!" He spat.

"Well, I didn't," Cougarpaw retorted. "It's your fault for attacking me; I never would've even *tried* to kill you if you hadn't been so mousebrained to not listen to me!"

The other apprentice opened his jaws to reply but the tan tom continued.

"Kits? Queens? Elders? Do you think ThunderClan brought them

to put them in danger? Why would we be attacking you with them?"

Suddenly Clawflank ran over, growling at the apprentice. "Vinepaw, you must go back to your camp." His mentor's ears flattened. "If this battle continues..." He shook his head. "You can't stay if this goes on. Leave now!"

Vinepaw looked at Cougarpaw's mentor. How did Clawflank know Vinepaw? *Probably just saw him or met him at a gathering*, the ThunderClan apprentice thought.

"Cougarpaw, this battle isn't safe for you either. Go hide in the tree-line where it's safe–"

Two ShadowClan cats, mentor and apprentice, sprinted up to them. There was a brown tabby she-cat with gray flecks, yellow-flecked eyes, and a stub of a tail. The apprentice was a dark gray tom, with black tabby stripes and amber eyes.

I know that apprentice... He thought.

Gravelpaw!

Clawflank's fur fluffed up twice his size. "Stop attacking us!" He hissed. "We've done no wrong!"

"You trespassed on our territory! Why are you so close to our camp?" The stubby-tailed brown mentor growled.

Gravelpaw ignored the conversation and leaped at Cougarpaw. Cougarpaw was surprised to feel Gravelpaw be much heavier than him, and he guessed the ShadowClan apprentice was about to become a warrior.

"I hope StarClan doesn't forgive you for this," Gravelpaw snarled. He sunk his claws into Cougarpaw's shoulders and the tan tom yowled in pain. The weight suddenly disappeared, much like how he'd felt with Atticus, and Cougarpaw watched Clawflank throw Gravelpaw off of him whilst being attacked by the brown she-cat.

"Cougarpaw, pairs!" Clawflank yowled.

Cougarpaw nodded at what he said and came up beside his mentor; even though he was much smaller, two ThunderClan cats could defeat one other cat.

But we still have Gravelpaw, Cougarpaw reminded himself.

Gravelpaw stood up and stopped in front of Cougarpaw. He leaped at the tan tom, exactly like last time, but Cougarpaw was prepared. He sidestepped and bowled into the ShadowClan tom, pinning him to the ground. But this other cat's strength was too much for him, and Gravelpaw easily knocked him off of his back, sweeping him off of his feet. Cougarpaw hit the ground and felt the weight appear back onto his body.

He was flipped over and Gravelpaw raked his claws over his muzzle.

"Agh! Get off of me!" Cougarpaw snarled, trying to knock him off, but it was no use. Gravelpaw's claws slid out farther and they sunk into his pelt. Cougarpaw yowled, looking around frantically for his mentor, but he was no where to be seen.

Did he leave me? Cougarpaw thought in fear.

But the gray apprentice from last time had crashed into the darker gray one, hissing at Gravelpaw.

Wait, what? Why is Vinepaw, a ShadowClan *apprentice, helping me against his own Clanmate?*

Is he a traitor?

Vinepaw's fur fluffed up and he took a few steps back, guarding Cougarpaw, who had now stood up.

"Gravelpaw, do you not understand?" Vinepaw growled. "ThunderClan isn't here to invade us! You're too arrogant to look around you; do you think ThunderClan would bring kits, queens, and elders to fight?"

"You never know," Gravelpaw retorted, amber eyes glowing in the darkness. "It could be a diversion!"

Vinepaw snarled. "Just–"

"*Stop!*" A yowl echoed through the forest. Cats stopped fighting, putting their claws down as they looked up at Wildjay. He was standing on a large boulder, and Cougarpaw watched as Sharkstar also leaped on it, his bright copper eyes looking over the deputy.

"Where's your leader?" Sharkstar spat. "I need to speak with him, since clearly you aren't here to fight."

Wildjay bristled. "Greenstar is dead," he meowed. "He was left behind in the fire, since we couldn't save him."

"Oh, so *you're* leader now?" Sharkstar raised a brow. "Alrighty, Wildstar–"

"It's Wild*jay*," he corrected harshly.

"I thought you were a leader now?" Sharkstar growled, his claws slipping out of their sheathes. "Make up your mind!"

"I haven't visited the Moonstone yet, so I'm not a leader. But listen–you need to control your cats! Do you think we brought our most innocent ranks to have them *killed*? We need shelter! A fire has destroyed our home, and we're seeking shelter while it burns out," Wildjay explained.

Sharkstar twisted his head to the ThunderClan camp, narrowing his eyes, blue-gray fur ruffling in the breeze. "The smoke is light." He turned back to Wildjay. "The fire's out. Go home."

"Do we look like we're in a state to go back on a trip to our home?" Wildjay snarled, narrowing his eyes. "Sharkstar, we can't go to RiverClan because of the river, and WindClan is too far. You're our only hope, for herbs, food, shelter..."

Sharkstar snarled. "And how am I suppose to know if this is a trap or not?"

Wildjay curled his lip. "Yeah, a fire burned our camp out and now we're trying to attack you."

Sharkstar flicked his tail, looking over the crowd of ThunderClan and ShadowClan cats.

"So?" Wildjay asked the ShadowClan leader.

"I'm thinking!" Sharkstar snapped. The blue-gray ShadowClan tom finally turned back to the ThunderClan deputy...or, well, *leader* now.

"Fine, I'll let your cats stay. But if you even *think* of invading–"

"Okay, okay, I get it. We won't touch anything we aren't suppose to. We'll be gone by tomorrow."

Sharkstar growled. "You better."

He turned to the cats. "ShadowClan, I've decided to let ThunderClan stay with us for the night! Their home was burned, and they need shelter." He flicked his tail. "Don't pick fights, just stay low. They'll be gone tomorrow."

Sharkstar leaped off, Wildjay following at the ShadowClan leader's heels.

"Why did you help me?" Cougarpaw turned on Vinepaw as the two Clans padded to the entrance of the ShadowClan camp.

Vinepaw shrugged. "You didn't kill me and Gravelpaw is ruthless. I'm almost sure he would've hurt you, possibly to death."

Cougarpaw gulped, bounding over the gray tom.

"So, I've never seen you around. What's your name? I heard Clawflank talk to you... Err.... Gah, I forgot," Vinepaw mewed to the ThunderClan apprentice.

"Cougarpaw," the tan tom purred. "And I know that you're Vinepaw."

Vinepaw nodded, a smile curling at his lips. "Yep. Now, let me show you the apprentices' den in the camp."

The cats reached the camp and Cougarpaw looked around. It was much different from the ThunderClan camp. Pine trees encircled the camp and rose up over the walls, and trees towered over the entrance. The ground underpaw wasn't muddy, but instead covered in dirt and some dark grass.

"Welcome to the humble ShadowClan camp!" Vinepaw smiled, blinking his copper eyes.

Cougarpaw flicked an ear. "Hey... I'm hungry. What about you?"

"Nah, I'm not. But here's the fresh kill pile." Vinepaw sat down beside Cougarpaw and watched him intently as he chose a small mouse.

"You can have something larger than that, you know," Vinepaw commented.

"I know, but I'd rather not push Sharkstar's trust."

Vinepaw laughed. "Sharkstar isn't really that bad. He just acts like he is to protect his Clan." The gray tom lowered his voice. "But I am convinced he isn't very fond of company."

Cougarpaw let out a chuckle, ripping in to the mouse. He quickly finished it and licked his lips, standing and tiring to Vinepaw. He blinked his green eyes and looked up at the sky, which was turning dark. Pink, blue, and orange highlighted the sky, and Cougarpaw realized that ShadowClan still didn't get as great of a view as ThunderClan.

The tan tom looked over at the nursery, noticing a little black and white kit.

"That's Smudgekit," Vinepaw spoke, following the ThunderClan apprentice's gaze. "He's the only tom in the nursery, so he's a bit wild." Vinepaw let out a purr and turned around. "I'll show you the apprentices' den. I'm sure you're tired from that battle."

Cougarpaw nodded and padded after the gray tom, being led to a clay den. Thorns covered the side and Cougarpaw examined them for a minute, before being forced to enter the den. It was dark but large, and he wondered how many apprentices were in ShadowClan. "Here, come lay down here." Vinepaw led him to an empty nest on the right–paw side, and Cougarpaw laid down. He breathed in the ShadowClan scent, realizing it wasn't as bad as every Clan thought it was.

Vinepaw dipped his head and exited the den.

Oh yeah. I forgot that Tigerflame, Darkcloud, and Shadowwhisker won't be in the den anymore.

He silently cheered for Shadowwhisker's riddance, but felt a pang of guilt. He quickly pushed it to the back of his mind as he thought back to the prophecy. *Of bright and dark, two cats shall be brought down from our ancestors. Only time can tell when they will figure out who they really are, but they shall meet in battle. If the brightness that shines loses, no cat will be safe anymore.*

And Shadowwhisker is the darkness... And I'm the brightness.

He let out a pitiful sigh. *I suppose it's just a matter of time before we meet in battle. But for now, let's just hope my Clan stays safe.*

———

A/N: Hey everyone! So I'm sure you know what my choice for which book I should complete next is! I'm sorry for all who wanted The Prophesied Four, but a certain someone convinced me to do what *I* wanted, so I decided to write Cougarstripe's Shock.

I hope you guys aren't mad or disappointed in me ;w; I just really want to finish this book. Hell, it's been nearly a year, so shouldn't I keep writing?

Anyway, what did you think of the chapter?

Oh yeah, and here's a joke someone made in the old version of this book:

Vinepaw is growing on me.
Like a vine.

canned laughter in the background

So if you could pick, would you rather pick Shadowwhisker or Gravelpaw for who you dislike more?

I'm going to have to say Shadowwhisker, since he did kill Cougarpaw's mother and plotted with Appleheart to set the camp on fire. But why did he do it? You'll have to wait to find out!

Another note that I'll be updating every Sunday, so you won't have to wait so long.

Anyway, please vote and comment your thoughts, and may StarClan light your path!

DISCONTINUED

I actually never really thought I would be making this part but.. unfortunately, it's here.

I got deeper into this in my update book Paint Politics. But, if you don't know, I've officially decided I'm discontinuing Cougarstripe's Shock.

I just wanted to put this here as a note to all the devoted fans and readers of this book and to also say I'm so sorry. This book wasn't the same after it was rewritten and my old account was deleted (olllllld fans will remember that). I just don't have the motivation or interest to continue Cougarstripe's Shock or his series as a whole.

I'm not going to let anyone continue writing because it means too much to me. Cougarstripe was my first developed Warriors OC and I can't pass him off to someone else. I'm sorry everyone, but unfortunately, this series will end here.

If this has been up for a while and you're reading this now, thanks for looking back on my old stuff just to see how much I've improved. Because even now, in September of 2017, I really think I'm writing a lot better. And I hope others agree as well.

Again, thank you to all the loyal and devoted fans❤ You've always been amazing and great and I hope you understand my reasoning for doing this.

Love you all.

-Paint